Aldan asks DPL to designate lot for new Tinian landfill. PAGE 2
DOI sees how Biden administration's agenda is aiding in Mawar recovery. PAGE 3

Hafa Adai!

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KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
Saipan Chamber of Commerce members pose for a photo during a press conference yesterday. From left, board member Donna Krum, executive director Kim Camacho, president Joseph Guerrero, and board member Brad Ruszala.

'A step closer to tourism recovery'

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
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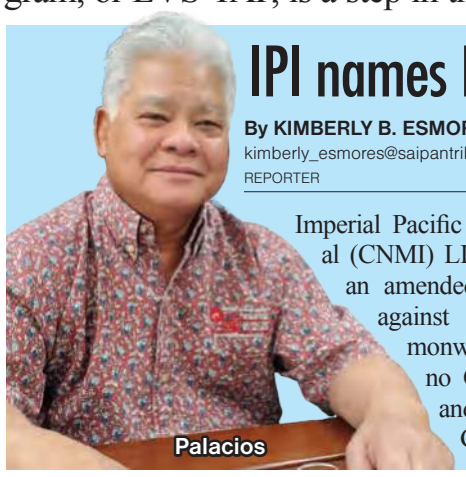
REPORTER

The Saipan Chamber of Commerce says the long-awaited establishment of the CNMI Economic Vitality & Security Travel Authorization Program, or EVS-TAP, is a step in the right direction in terms of recovery for the CNMI's tourism industry.

Chamber president Joseph Guerrero said in a news briefing yesterday that the creation of the EVS-TAP program,

See TOURISM on Page 4


Palacios

IPI names Palacios in lawsuit vs. CCC

By KIMBERLY B. ESMORES
kimberly_esmores@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Imperial Pacific International (CNMI) LLC has filed an amended complaint against the Commonwealth Casino Commission and has named Gov. Arnold I. Palacios as a defendant.

IPI, which is suing the CCC over allegations it is depriving the casino investor of its constitutional rights by requiring it to pay "excessive and unlawful fees," filed yesterday an amended complaint with the U.S. District Court for the NMI.

In it, IPI names Palacios as one

See IPI on Page 4

DeLeon Guerrero urges Palacios to seek federal help to establish NMI paycheck protection plan

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) introduced yesterday a resolution to request Gov. Arnold I. Palacios to ask the federal

See FEDERAL on Page 4

DeLeon Guerrero

21 soldiers killed in deadliest single attack on Israeli forces since war in Gaza began

AP
Palestinians fleeing from Khan Younis from Israeli ground and air offensive on the Gaza Strip arrive in Rafah, southern Gaza, Monday, Jan. 22, 2024.

By JOSEF FEDERMAN and NAJIB JOBAIN
Associated Press

JERUSALEM (AP)— Twenty-one soldiers were killed in the Gaza Strip in the deadliest attack on Israel's forces since the Oct. 7 Hamas raid that triggered the war, the military said Tuesday, a major setback that could add to mounting calls for a cease-fire.

Hours later, the military announced that ground forces had encircled the southern city of Khan Younis, Gaza's second largest, where dozens of Palestinians have been killed and wounded in heavy fighting in recent days.

Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu mourned the soldiers but vowed to press

See SOLDIERS on Page 4

INSIDE

BUSINESS
United Airlines said Monday it will lose money in the first three months of this year as it deals with the grounding of its Boeing 737 Max 9 planes.
PAGE 11

NATION
A divided Supreme Court on Monday allowed Border Patrol agents to resume cutting for now razor wire that Texas installed along a stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border.
PAGE 12

ASIA
The Taliban are restricting Afghan women's access to work, travel and health care if they are unmarried or don't have a male guardian.
PAGE 13

SCAN ME WITH A COMPATIBLE QR READER TO KEEP UPDATED ON ALL THE LATEST NEWS.

Local

Aldan asks DPL to designate lot for new Tinian landfill

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

Tinian Mayor Edwin P. Aldan has requested the Department of Public Lands to designate a piece of public land on Tinian for a proposed landfill site.

In a letter to DPL Secretary Teresita A. Santos, Aldan said the prompt acquisition and designation of this land, which measures 26,093 square meters, will enable

» Santos says they are expediting process

them to swiftly address their solid waste management concerns and fulfill their obligations of being good stewards the environment.

Sen. Karl R. King-Nabors (R-Tinian), who chairs the Tinian Legislative Delegation, and 19th Tinian Municipal Council chair Joseph E. Santos also signed the letter.

When asked yesterday about Aldan's request, Santos said they are moving through the process expeditiously, but there are requirements that need to be met first before the issuance of the landfill designation.

SAIPAN TRIBUNE

In this file photo, 6,000 cubic yards of metal Super Typhoon Yutu debris at the Debris Center on Tinian wait to be shipped to Saipan.

She said the surveyors have just completed the survey work, subject to approval and recordation. The Office of Planning and Development will then process the landfill designation, obtain the necessary signatories, record the designation, and forward it to the Municipality of Tinian.

Aldan said it is the goal of the Tinian leadership to permanently close the existing landfill in the next 10 years and they are now working with the U.S. Department of Defense and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on building a new landfill at the Atgidon site, located within the area that is leased by the U.S. military.

The mayor said the Municipality of Tinian and Aguiguan has been talking with the OPD, Department of Public Works, Bureau of Environmental and Coastal Quality, and federal partners from the EPA in their efforts to address Tinian's solid waste concerns.

Part of their immediate and most pressing concern is that the existing landfill is non-compliant with regulations, Aldan said.

In order to address this, he said, the municipality is required to obtain a permit for the existing dump and follow through with EPA and BECQ's orders for compliance.

Aldan said once the existing landfill is permitted, the municipality can then address all other solid waste concerns with regards to landfill capacity, implementing tipping fees, etc., thus ensuring compliance with national environmental regulations and obtaining federal grant funding for landfill development.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Tinian Mayor Edwin K. Aldan speaks to reporters in this file photo.

Coast Guard responds to grounded vessel off the coast of Maui harbor

HONOLULU, Hawaii—The U.S. Coast Guard is responding to a passenger ferry that ran aground near Maalaea Harbor, Maui, on Monday.

At 5:05am, Coast Guard Sector Honolulu watchstanders received notification from the small passenger vessel *Expeditions Five*, a 55-foot ferry with three crew members on board, that they had run aground near the entrance to Maalaea Harbor.

Watchstanders issued an urgent marine broadcast to mariners and dispatched a 29-foot Response Boat-small crew from Station Maui. The Station Maui crew confirmed that the vessel was hard aground with their anchor deployed and the vessel's hull was intact.

The *Expeditions Five* has a maximum diesel fuel capacity of 250 gallons, but there is no sheen or pollution reported coming from the vessel at this time. The vessel's management is in contact with their insurance company to coordinate a plan for salvage efforts.

The next high tide is forecast for 4am, Jan. 23, 2024.

The Coast Guard will continue to monitor the situation. ***(USCG)***

MOS cleans up CK; will soon move to Susupe

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.com
CORRESPONDENT

As part of its Village Cleanup program, the Saipan Mayor's Office announced that it has removed more than 700 cubic yards of green waste and 104 cubic yards of white goods from the village of Chalan Kanoa.

The announcement, made yesterday in a news release, stated that Saipan Mayor Ramon Blas "RB" Camacho is pleased to see the response of village residents in the ongoing island-wide village cleanup efforts.

Camacho initiated the operation to assist Chalan Kanoa residents in preparation for the forthcoming start of village inspections. Since the start of the cleanup, many residents have expressed positive feedback on the operations and have taken full advantage of the assistance being provided by the Mayor's Office.

The same news release said the Chalan Kanoa cleanup is now 90% complete and the Saipan Mayor's Office's Field Operations staff will soon be moving north into Susupe to continue removing waste and debris in other villages.

Camacho urged Saipan residents to be patient as his staff will be making their way into all the villages island-wide. He also asked residents to continue disposing their trash as usual.

For any questions or more information, contact the Saipan Mayor's Office at (670) 234-6208. Office hours are Monday through Friday, 7:30am-4:30pm. The Saipan Mayor's Office is also open through lunch.

SAIPAN MAYOR'S OFFICE

Staff of the Saipan Mayor's Office pick up trash in Chalan Kanoa last Jan. 11.

SAIPAN MAYOR'S OFFICE

Saipan Ramon Mayor Ramon Blas Camacho looks on as his staff clean up debris in Chalan Kanoa last Jan. 11.

SAIPAN MAYOR'S OFFICE

The Saipan Mayor's Office said the Chalan Kanoa cleanup is now 90% complete.

SAIPAN MAYOR'S OFFICE

The Saipan Mayor's Office removed more than 700 cubic yards of green waste and 104 cubic yards of white goods from Chalan Kanoa.

DOI sees how Biden administration's agenda is aiding in Mawar recovery

FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Interior Secretary Deb Haaland visited Saipan during her tour of the Pacific Islands in 2023.

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The U.S. Department of the Interior's leadership has expressed deep appreciation learning about the impact of Typhoon Mawar's devastation in May 2023 and seeing first-hand how the Biden administration's Investing in America agenda is aiding recovery efforts.

Shantha Ready Alonso, DOI's Intergovernmental and External Affairs director, recently thanked Senate President Edith E. DeLeon Guerrero (D-Saipan) for the time the senator took to spend with Interior Secretary Deb Haaland during her tour of the Pacific Islands in 2023.

"We are thankful for every bit of progress we make together toward climate resilience, healthy ecosystems, and cultural preservation," said Alonso in a letter to DeLeon Guerrero.

Alonso's office, the Office of Intergovernmental and External Affairs, serves as a liaison for governmental and non-governmental partners to strengthen relationships with the Office of the DOI Secretary. Alonso said their office is also available to facilitate requests with departmental offices and bureaus and is DeLeon Guerrero's point of contact with the DOI for any follow-up or future requests.

Typhoon Mawar made landfall in Guam on May 24, 2023. It was the strongest to strike the island in at least two decades. Mawar also hit Rota.

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www.developcnmi.com

PUBLIC NOTICE
Wednesday, January 24, 2024

PURSUANT TO PUBLIC LAW 8-41, THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS OF THE DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION DIVISION (DCD) OF THE COMMONWEALTH ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AUTHORITY (CEDA) THRU ITS ACTING CHAIRMAN, HEREBY INFORMS THE GENERAL PUBLIC THAT THE DCD BOARD OF DIRECTORS WILL HOLD A SPECIAL MEETING ON FRIDAY, JANUARY 26, 2024 AT 9:00 A.M.. THE MEETING WILL BE HELD AT THE CEDA CONFERENCE ROOM, FIRST FLOOR, CEDA BUILDING, OLEAI, SAIPAN. THE AGENDA FOR THIS MEETING IS AS FOLLOWS:

AGENDA

I. PRELIMINARY MATTERS
   A. Call to Order
   B. Roll Call
   C. Adoption of Agenda
II. ELECTION OF OFFICERS
III. PUBLIC COMMENTS
IV. EXECUTIVE SESSION
V. ADJOURNMENT

All interested persons are welcome to attend and to submit written or oral testimony on the above agenda items. (Note: Pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section 13(a)(7) and Section 1(c), the Board may vote to meet in executive session.

/s/ DANIEL Q. TAITANO
Acting Chairman

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SOLDIERS

From page 1

ahead with the offensive until "absolute victory" over Hamas. He has also promised to return over 100 hostages held captive in Gaza. But Israelis are increasingly divided on the question of whether it's possible to do either, and large numbers of Israeli casualties have pressured Israel's government to halt past military operations.

A senior Egyptian official meanwhile said Israel has proposed a two-month ceasefire in which the hostages would be freed in exchange for the release of Palestinians imprisoned by Israel and top Hamas leaders in Gaza would be allowed to relocate to other countries.

The official, who was not authorized to brief media and spoke on condition of anonymity, said Hamas rejected the proposal and is insisting that no more hostages will be released until Israel ends its offensive and withdraws from Gaza. Israel's government declined to comment on the talks.

The official said Egypt and Qatar, which have brokered past agreements between Israel and Hamas, were developing a multistage proposal to try and bridge the gaps. Families of the hostages have called for Israel to reach a deal with Hamas, saying time is running out to bring the hostages home alive.

On Monday, Israeli reservists were preparing explosives to demolish two buildings in central Gaza when a militant fired a rocket-propelled grenade at a tank nearby. The blast triggered the explosives, causing both two-story buildings to collapse on the soldiers inside.

At least 217 soldiers have been killed since the ground offensive began in late October, including three killed in a separate event Monday, according to the military.

Netanyahu acknowledged it was "one of the hardest days" since the war began and said the military would launch an investigation. "In the name of our heroes, and for our own lives, we will not stop fighting until absolute victory," he wrote on X, formerly known as Twitter.

Israel launched its offensive after Hamas crossed the border Oct. 7, killed over 1,200 people and abducted some 250 others. More than 100 were released in November in exchange for a weeklong cease-fire and the release of 240 Palestinians imprisoned by Israel.

The offensive has caused widespread destruction, displaced an estimated 85% of Gaza's population and left over 25,000 Palestinians dead, according to health officials in the Hamas-run territory. The United Nations and international aid agencies say the fighting has caused a humanitarian disaster, with a quarter of Gaza's 2.3 million people facing starvation.

The war has heightened regional tensions, with Iran-backed groups in Lebanon, Syria, Iraq and Yemen attacking United States and Israeli targets in support of Palestinians. The U.S. and Britain launched another wave of strikes Monday against the Houthi rebels in Yemen, who have targeted international shipping in the Red Sea in what they portray as a blockade of Israel.

DEADLY FIGHTING IN THE CENTER AND SOUTH

Hamas is believed to have suffered heavy losses but has continued to put up stiff resistance in the face of one of the deadliest air and ground offensives in recent history. Militants are still battling Israeli forces across the territory and launching rockets into Israel.

The attack that killed the soldiers occurred some 600 meters (yards) from the border in Maghazi, one of three built-up refugee camps in central Gaza dating back to the 1948 war surrounding Israel's creation.

Ground operations have been focused on the camps, as well as Khan Younis, after Israel claimed to have largely defeated Hamas in northern Gaza in operations that caused widespread destruction to that part of the territory, including Gaza City.

The military said its forces had killed dozens of militants in Khan Younis in recent days and had managed to encircle the city. It did not provide evidence, and it was not possible to independently confirm details about the fighting there.

IPI

From page 1

of the defendants. The other named defendants are CCC chair Edward C. Deleon Guerrero, CCC vice chair Rafael S. Demapan, CCC commissioners Mariano Taitano, Martin Mendiola, Ramon M. Dela Cruz, and CCC executive director Andrew Yeom.

IPI claims that, acting under the color of Commonwealth law, the defendants have caused it to suffer a substantial deprivation of its contract rights, in violation of the U.S. and Commonwealth constitutions.

"The regulatory fee statute imposed additional fees for doing business in the CNMI, which constitutes a substantial and unconstitutional impairment of the Casino License Agreement. IPI was and is still required to pay the $3-million annual regulatory fee as a prerequisite to exercising its existing contractual and property rights set forth explicitly in the CLA, rights for which it already has compensated [the] CNMI. In essence, defendants are double-charging IPI. The annual regulatory fees are substantial, and the impairment to the express and implied terms of the CLA is direct. The later imposed regulatory fees, Commission Order 2021-002, and the most recent demand for immediate payment by defendants effectively nullify the explicit terms of the CLA and impose completely unexpected and new liabilities and limitations on the operation of IPI. IPI has incurred and will continue to incur attorney's fees and costs because of these proceedings, in amounts that cannot yet be ascertained," IPI argues.

As relief, IPI wants the court to issue a declaration stating that IPI is exempt or excepted from, or not subject to, the terms of the regulatory fee.

IPI also wants the court to issue an injunction against the defendants preventing the enforcement of the regulatory fee statute and collection of the annual regulatory fee against IPI, or mandating that defendants to exempt or except IPI from the annual regulatory fee.

IPI also seeks a declaration stating that the regulatory fee statute, as applied to IPI, is unconstitutional, and for the court to order the defendants to pay restitution for all regulatory fees paid by IPI in the past;

The casino investor also asks the court to order the defendants to vacate, nullify any and all adverse administrative decisions against IPI that were based upon the annual regulatory fee statute, including the imposition of fees, interests and penalties for failure to pay the annual regulatory fees; as well as the suspension of its license based upon the annual regulatory fee statute.

TOURISM

From page 1

which is specific to travelers coming to the CNMI from the People's Republic of China, is good news for the CNMI as it essentially has the same provisions as the discretionary parole program but with features that bolster national security.

"We want people who should not be here to not be allowed entry to the CNMI. The discretionary parole is authorization that the secretary of [the U.S. Department of] Homeland Security bestows upon Customs and Border Protection officers to admit people on a case-by-case basis, versus the CNMI EVS-TAP, which is a rule that becomes law that essentially allows CBP to conduct a pre-vetting of travelers before they arrive," he said.

For the past few years, the CNMI has been exerting tremendous efforts to revive the tourism industry with the hope of bringing the CNMI's arrival numbers back to the level before the COVID-19 pandemic.

However, geopolitical tensions hindering the return of the China market—which makes up nearly half of the CNMI's tourist population pre-COVID—has slowed the recovery process.

DHS officially establishing the EVS-TAP program is a step in the right direction, said Guerrero.

Through the EVS-TAP, Guerrero said the CBP will do an even better job of protecting the CNMI's borders, which plays well into the concerns of the community.

"We are all concerned about security and the safety of our country and our islands," he said.

In addition, EVS-TAP will also benefit the CNMI and CBP economically, Guerrero said.

"Homeland Security identified four major benefits of this rule: the reduction in administrative costs to CBP; reduction in the number of inadmissibility cases; it improves national security; and most importantly the increase in travel potentially from the PRC," he said.

Last week, DHS approved the interim final ruling establishing the EVS-TAP and amending the Guam/CNMI Visa Waiver Program. The program would essentially allow visa-free travel for prescreened travelers from China to the CNMI.

According to the interim final ruling, DHS will require persons intending to travel to the CNMI under the Guam-CNMI Visa Waiver Program to submit Form I-736 electronically in advance of travel and receive an electronic travel authorization prior to boarding a flight to Guam or the CNMI. This rule also establishes the EVS-TAP as a restricted sub-program of the G–CNMI VWP.

Under the current visa waiver program regulations, a paper U.S. Customs and Border Protection Form I-736 is presented to CBP upon arrival.

U.S. lawmakers previously wrote Homeland Security Secretary Alejandro Mayorkas about the entry of nationals from the People's Republic of China into the CNMI through the discretionary parole program. That letter called for the program's abolition.

The Chamber, the Hotel Association for the NMI, and CNMI lawmakers have pushed for the establishment of the EVS-TAP in response to the U.S. lawmakers' efforts.

The CNMI EVS-TAP was first proposed in 2019 and aims to enhance security measures while ensuring the orderly entry of PRC nationals for tourism purposes.

FEDERAL

From page 1

government for help in creating a CNMI-only Paycheck Protection Program to help businesses keep their workforce during the post-COVID-19 crisis economic recession.

"We need to find ways to help businesses stay afloat while the lack of sufficient flights/tourists is being navigated," said DeLeon Guerrero in response to *Saipan Tribune*'s request for comments about her Senate Resolution 23-13.

She said the Paycheck Protection Program saves jobs and businesses. She noted that many businesses are still struggling and are far from their pre-pandemic levels. The lack of sufficient tourists and/or foot traffic to these businesses only aggravates the economic climate and when decisions to reduce hours or close shop happens, the reality is Business Gross Revenue Tax collection is affected as well, she said.

One way to assist businesses and their employers during this difficult time is to request for federal assistance to establish a CNMI-only PPP for a certain period of time, similar to the Small Business Administration's PPP during the COVID-19 crisis, states DeLeon Guerrero's Senate Resolution 23-13.

She said creating a CNMI-only PPP to help employers cover payroll costs including benefits and to pay interest on mortgages, rent, and utilities is necessary to ensure that CNMI businesses continue to operate and employ people.

DeLeon Guerrero said it is prudent to assist businesses before they shutter their doors and leave the CNMI.

With the issuance of the federal COVID-19 Public Health Emergency Declaration, then-CNMI governor Ralph DLG Torres issued an executive order to shut down the government, schools, and local businesses on March 16, 2020, to prevent the spread of the virus. Most businesses were closed for many months except for retail stores, distributors and pharmacies. The airports were closed, flights were cancelled, and residents and visitors were not able to enter and exit the CNMI for months.

As a result, DeLeon Guerrero said, the CNMI government furloughed over 700 of its 3,000-plus employees, only allowing essential government workers to work to protect the health, safety and welfare of people.

DeLeon Guerrero said the complete shutdown of the CNMI's economy due to the COVID-19 pandemic nearly collapsed the CNMI government, its businesses, and the overall economy due to the drastic loss of revenue and income.

Between fiscal years 2020 and 2023, the CNMI budget dropped to between 48% and 51%.

Currently, DeLeon Guerrero said, the anticipated revenues for fiscal year 2024 are still 36.8% less than the fiscal year 2019 pre-pandemic level.

Fortunately, she said, federal appropriations, including the Coronavirus Aid, Relief, and Economic Security Act (2020), the Coronavirus Response and Consolidated Appropriations Act (2021), and the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 provided desperately needed supplemental funds to address the shortfall in the CNMI's budget revenues, as well as financial assistance for employees, employers, and the CNMI public during the pandemic.

Financial assistance included the PPP established by the CARES Act, which was implemented by the Small Business Administration with support from the Department of the U.S. Treasury.

DeLeon Guererro said this program gave small businesses funds to pay up to eight weeks of payroll costs, including benefits. The funds were also used to pay interest on mortgages, rent, and utilities.

The PPP prioritized the workforce employed by small businesses by authorizing federal funds toward job retention and certain other expenses.

Currently, DeLeon Guerrero said, the CNMI's economy continues to be in a deep recession and may not recover until the main economic industry—tourism—fully resumes.

With no other industry present to support employment, commercial activity, and government revenues, the imminent collapse of the tourism industry will have repercussions for the future of the CNMI that will last for years, she said.

The Senate president underscored the need for the CNMI to act now to prevent more businesses from shuttering their doors due to the lack of visitors and business activities.

She noted that some businesses have begun to reduce their workforce by laying off employees as a result of low revenue collection and slow business activities.

M2 Fitness says goodbye to group's founder

CHRYSTAL MARINO

M2 Fitness members gather for a photo last Saturday evening as they say bon voyage to founder and president Mary Grace Bautista after their Send Off Spectacular workout session at their studio in Gualo Rai.

By CHRYSTAL MARINO
chrystal_marino@saipantribune.comCORRESPONDENT

There was a lot of love and even some tears shed as members of M2 Fitness gathered last Saturday evening at their studio in Gualo Rai to share one last workout session with their founder before her departure from Saipan on Sunday.

With M2 Fitness president and head coach Mary Grace Bautista and her family relocating to Guam, the two-hour workout session last Saturday became a sort of sendoff to honor her, and ended with light refreshments and members giving her a plaque of recognition.

Bautista, who founded the non-profit organization in the middle of the COVID-19 pandemic, said she remains excited about the future with M2 Fitness. She would be not only relocating, but will possibly be expanding the fitness group to Guam, with plans to offer the same classes and services, as well as introduce innovative fitness programs.

Bautista, who saw M2 Fitness grow in the past four years into one of the recognized Zumba fitness programs on Saipan, said she wants to bring that message to the Guam community, which is to give priority to one's health and well-being.

"Looking back at the past three years of M2 Fitness, I feel a profound sense of pride and gratitude. It's been a rewarding journey. Witnessing our positive impact on the community's well-being has been inspiring," she said. "The journey has been transformative, witnessing the organization grow, positively impacting lives, and becoming an integral part of the community. It fuels my passion to continue making a meaningful difference in the years to come.

Bautista explained that she is moving to Guam because she has been offered a job "that not only aligns with my career goals but also offers relocation and other support for the whole family. That opens opportunities for a better future for my family. It's a positive step for both my professional and personal life."

CHRYSTAL MARINO

M2 Fitness founder, head coach, and president Mary Grace Bautista says thans to her Zumba family during their final workout session together last Saturday at their studio in Gualo Rai.

CHRYSTAL MARINO

Members of M2 Fitness' Zumbalizious give an appreciation award to M2 founder and president Mary Grace Bautista after their Send Off Spectacular workout at M2 studio in Gualo Rai.

Bautista said M2 Fitness vice president and cofounder Mishael "Mita" Pelicano and fitness coach Julie Harrison will be taking the reins on Saipan but she will continue as M2 Fitness' president and will still be involved.

"I'll continue to serve as the president of the M2 Fitness group, even with my physical absence. While vice president Mita and coach Julie will take on a more active role, I'll remain actively involved in strategic decisions and overall leadership to ensure the continued success of the organization."

She extends her deepest gratitude to her M2 Fitness family "for your unwavering support. Our journey doesn't end here—we're expanding M2 Fitness to the new location. You've been the heartbeat of our community, and together, we'll continue promoting health and well-being, albeit in different geographical spaces. Stay connected, stay committed, and let's carry our shared mission forward."

Bautista said she plans to visit Saipan on occasion and be involved with her Saipan M2Fitness family.

Harrison said they are sad that Bautista is leaving. but "we're excited for her future. …She's very much the glue for us, but she's been so encouraging about the future and the team that's still here and so we're going to miss her a lot…."

Harrison noted that it was Bautista who helped her get out of her shell. "Coach Grace is probably one of the most inspiring, most dedicated people I've ever met in my entire life. …She changed my life. I used to hide in the back, but she calls people out to be the best they can be and then gives them a way to do it," she said.

Desolee Calayo also described Bautista as the "the heart and soul" of the group. "I feel sad a bit, but she's only moving to Guam. It isn't very far and, as I always say, it's not goodbye but see you later because M2 is expanding."

COMMONWEALTH OF THE NORTHERN MARIANA ISLANDS
NORTHERN MARIANAS HOUSING CORPORATION

NOTICE OF FUNDING AVAILABILITY
OF
COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT FUNDS
FOR PROGRAM YEAR 2024

THIS ADVERTISEMENT IS PAID FOR BY NMHC WITH CPD FUNDS.

The Government of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands, **through the** Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) is announcing the availability of an **estimated** $1,550,603.00 in Community Planning and Development (CPD) funds available from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. NMHC anticipates receiving an estimated amount of $980,125.00 in Community Development Block Grants (CDBG); $489,268.00 in Home Investment Partnerships (HOME); and, $81,210.00 in Emergency Solutions Grant (ESG) funds for Program Year (PY) 2024.

The CDBG funds, authorized under Title I of the Housing and Community Development Act of 1974, may be used for a wide range of community development activities to revitalize neighborhoods, provide affordable housing, expand economic opportunities, and improve community facilities and services. However, use of these funds must meet at least one of the national objectives which include: 1) to benefit low and moderate-income families; 2) to eliminate slum or blight conditions; or 3) to meet other urgent community development needs.

The CDBG program requires a grant recipient to certify that it will minimize displacement of persons as a result of activities assisted with CDBG funds. The CNMI government does not plan on undertaking any activity which will cause displacement of persons. In the event of any unforeseen displacement resulting from any CDBG funded activity, the CNMI government will comply with the requirements of the Uniform Relocation Assistance and Real Property Acquisition Policies Act of 1970, its implementing regulation and applicable local law.

HOME funds may be used to create affordable housing through financing assistance, site acquisition or improvement, and rehabilitating existing residential dwellings as well as providing funds for new construction or purchase of a single-family residential dwelling. Use of HOME funds must benefit low-income families.

ESG funds may be used to rehabilitate or convert to buildings into homeless shelters and for shelter operating expenses, supportive services and homeless prevention **and rapid re-housing** activities. Use of ESG funds must benefit the homeless.

Applications for the use of CPD funds are available for pick up at the Northern Marianas Housing Corporation (NMHC) located in Garapan, Saipan; NMC Campus Bldg. A, San Jose Village, Tinian; and, Sinapalo III Village, Rota, beginning December 13, 2023.

You may also obtain the application online at www.nmhcgov.net in the section titled "Community Planning Development (CDBG)"

Applications must be submitted to the NMHC Offices in Garapan, Saipan (Saipan Residents); NMC Bldg. A, San Jose, Tinian (Tinian Residents); and, Sinapalo III Village, Rota (Rota Residents) by ***March 13, 2024, no later than 4:30 p.m. Applications submitted after March 13, 2024, will not be accepted.***

A briefing will be conducted for interested applicants and for those applicants who have picked up an application for the use of CPD funds. The briefing will address the program requirements and regulations concerning the usage of CPD funds.

The schedules for briefing are as follows:

February 14, 2024, 5:30 p.m. for the island of Saipan
February 15, 2024, 5:30 p.m. for the island of Tinian
February 16, 2024 5:30 p.m. for the island of Rota

We are encouraging all non-profit, for profit, and government service providers who are providing services to people with disabilities, homeless individuals, and emergency shelter administrators and operators to attend this briefing.

For residents living on the island of Saipan, the briefing will held at the NMHC Office in Garapan; Residents living on the island of Tinian, the briefing will be held at the NMHC Office at the NMC Campus, Building A; and Residents living on the island of Rota, the briefing will be held at the Rota Mayor's Office Conference Room in Tatachog.

Accommodations for disabled individuals or other non-English speaking individuals who wish to attend the briefing are available upon request by giving at least 24 hours notice prior to the meeting so that such needs can be arranged and provided. Additional inquiries, concerning the CPD program, such as eligibility criteria and program requirements, may be directed to Ms. Zenie P. Mafnas, Deputy Corporate Director or Ms. Tricia Tenorio, Planner at 234-6866 or 233-0076

/s/
Jesse S. Palacios
Corporate Director

SHS and DCP Guam Animals in Need Training

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Guam Animals in Need's Kelsey Graupner is seen interacting with a dog at the shelter during Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program manager Martin Pangelinan's training last Jan. 16-19.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Guam Animals in Need's Paul Blas washes down a dog kennel at their shelter.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Guam's animal control officers are seen loading up dogs into their truck beds during Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program manager Martin Pangelinan's training last Jan. 16-19.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

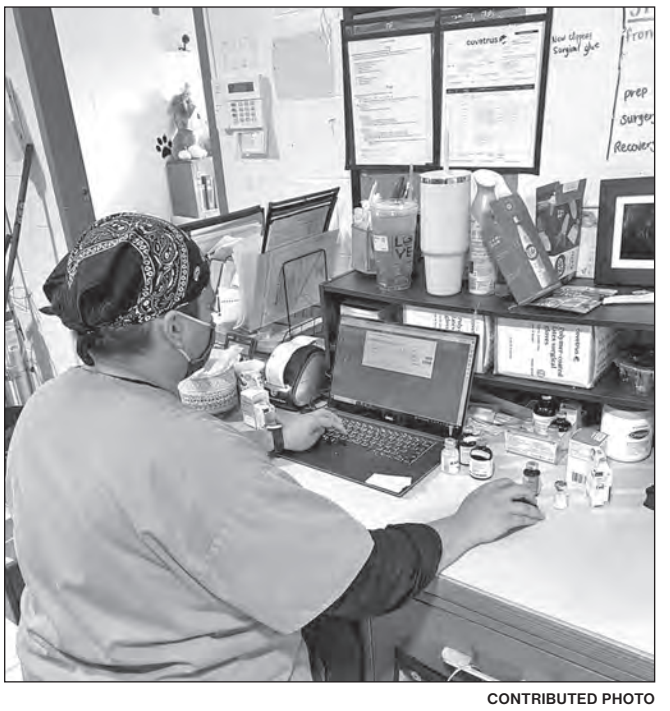
Dr. Mariana Turner, right, in gray shirt, and GAIN director Ali Hadley, standing next to Turner, are seen speaking to the trainees of the "compassion fatigue" training in GAIN during Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program manager Martin Pangelinan's training last Jan. 16-19.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Last month, Guam Animals in Need's director Ali Hadley, talking, meets with Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program staff and Saipan Humane Society staff to see what they are interested in the most for their training in Guam.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

The Guam Animals in Need animal shelter sign outside their shelter is seen as Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program manager Martin Pangelinan makes his way to the staff training last Jan. 16-19.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Guam Animals in Need Spay, Neuter Island Pets vet tech Frankie Fernandez is at work during Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program manager Martin Pangelinan's training with GAIN last Jan. 16-19.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Left, Dr. Brenda Smith, Guam Animals in Need's veterinarian, and a shelter volunteer is seen in the shelter during Saipan Mayor's Office Dog Control Program manager Martin Pangelinan's training last Jan. 16-19.

Hawaii's governor hails support for Maui and targets vacation rentals exacerbating housing shortage

AP

Hawaii Gov. Josh Green speaks to reporters in Honolulu on Monday, Jan. 22, 2024, after delivering his State of the State address at the Hawaii State Capitol.

AP

Hawaii Gov. Josh Green delivers his State of the State address in the House of Representatives at the Hawaii State Capitol in Honolulu on Monday, Jan. 22, 2024.

HONOLULU (AP)—Hawaii Gov. Josh Green on Monday used his annual State of the State address to lead lawmakers and guests in a moment of silence for victims of the Lahaina wildfire and to propose aggressive steps to shift more vacation rentals into residential use to meet both Maui and the state's acute housing needs.

Those gathered for the speech delivered a standing ovation to two Maui firefighters—Keahi Ho and Koa Bonnell—who traveled from Maui for the governor's talk, which focused heavily on helping Maui recover from August's deadly wildfires.

"The people of Maui have shown strength in the face of adversity," said Green, a Democrat. "But the days ahead will not been easy and they will continue to need our support and we will be there for them as long as it takes."

A wildfire fueled by hurricane-force winds raced through the historic coastal town of Lahaina on Aug. 8, killing 100 people and destroying thousands of homes and buildings.

Green's acknowledgement of all those who rushed to Maui's aid after the fire brought tears to the eyes of state Rep. Dee Morikawa, the House majority floor leader and a Democrat representing the western part of Kauai and Niihau.

"It's just good to know that all of Hawaii is coming together for Maui," Morikawa said after the address.

The most urgent unmet need on Maui is now stable long-term housing for some 5,000 residents who are staying in hotel rooms because they haven't been able to find affordable places to rent on the island, one of the nation's most expensive places to live.

Green aims for all 5,000 to move into long-term housing by March 1 in part by encouraging owners of vacation rentals to make their units available to wildfire evacuees. He told reporters authorities have about two-thirds of the needed housing units lined up so far. The Federal Emergency Management Agency and charitable organizations will be covering the rental costs.

More broadly and longer-term, Green proposed a two-year "tax amnesty" to encourage owners of vacation rentals around the state to sell to owner-occupants or long-term rental landlords. Participants would be exempt from capital gains, conveyance and general excise taxes under this two-year program.

Green told reporters afterward he was going to put "a lot of pressure" on short-term rentals because he didn't believe they were appropriate.

"I don't want to be rude, but I do want people to realize that that market should be for our local families," Green said. He noted that workers in a range of fields—including nurses now on strike at the state's only pediatric hospital—are struggling because of Hawaii's housing shortage and high housing costs.

In addition, Green said he's asking the Legislature to put $373 million in the budget for infrastructure and housing.

"This remains our administration's top statewide priority," he said.

Green revisited the idea of imposing a fee on travelers to help pay for environmental upkeep after a proposal to do so died in committee last year. The governor suggested charging each family visiting Hawaii a $25 "climate impact fee" when they check in to their hotel or short-term rental. He said this would raise $68 million a year.

Democratic House leaders identified common priorities with the governor, particularly on affordable housing, mental health care and climate change.

The House Finance Committee's chairperson, Rep. Kyle Yamashita, said he would have to look at the details of the governor's tax amnesty plan but indicated he was open to the idea.

"At the end of the day, I think we have to look at every option to deal with this issue," Yamashita said after the speech. "They are affecting residential areas throughout the state. And it's something that we have to look into more deeply."

House Speaker Scott Saiki said the House would cooperate with the governor.

"We need to solve problems in our state, and we need to find solutions that are going to be workable," Saiki said.

Trial of Honolulu businessman is providing possible glimpse of Hawaii's underworld

HONOLULU (AP)—A U.S. prosecutor revealed a possible glimpse into Hawaii's underworld on Monday as he outlined the crimes a Honolulu businessman is accused of orchestrating: the kidnapping of a 72-year-old accountant who owed a debt, the release of a toxic chemical into a rival's nightclubs and the killing of his late son's best friend, among them.

Michael Miske Jr. was arrested in 2020, along with seven people whom prosecutors described as associates. But following a series of guilty pleas by the others—including a plea deal signed by his half-brother on Saturday—the trial opened with Miske as the lone defendant.

"The defendant used fear, violence and intimidation to get what he wanted," Assistant U.S. Attorney William Akina said in his opening statement. "What he wanted was money, control and revenge."

Miske's attorney, Michael Kennedy, painted a completely different picture of his client.

Miske, 49, wasn't a crime lord, but rather a "self-made man" who, despite growing up "on the wrong side of the tracks," successfully built a family business called Kama'aina Termite and Pest Control, Kennedy said in his opening statement.

The company saved iconic Hawaii structures and "cultural treasures," including outdoor theater Waikiki Shell, 'Iolani Palace and the Polynesian Cultural Center, Kennedy said. Miske even fumigated a Honolulu concert hall for free after the city couldn't afford the $200,000 estimate, Kennedy said.

AP

A sign for the Prince Jonah Kuhio Kalanianaole Federal Building and Courthouse is displayed outside the courthouse on Monday, Jan. 22, 2024, in Honolulu.

Akina alleged that Miske also owned several nightclubs where disputes over bar tabs would be met with physical assault from his "thugs." In addition, he made millions selling illegal commercial-grade aerial fireworks on the black market, Akina said.

The businessman also groomed people from his Waimanalo neighborhood to violently rob drug dealers and carry out other orders, the prosecutor said.

Akina said Miske ordered hits on people, and though many were never carried out, at least one was: the 2016 killing of Johnathan Fraser, best friend to Miske's only son, Caleb. Miske had long thought Fraser was a bad influence on Caleb, and blamed Fraser when the friends got into a car crash in 2015 that led to Caleb's death, Akina said.

"There could be only one price to pay for the death of the defendant's son," Akina said. "A life for a life."

An indictment alleges that Miske purchased a boat to dump Fraser's body into the ocean, though the body has never been found.

Kennedy told jurors on Monday that Miske didn't blame Fraser for the crash and had nothing to do with his disappearance.

The people who will be testifying against Miske have something to gain from authorities, Kennedy said, referring to plea deals made by his alleged associates.

"Lies are going to rain down into this courtroom from that stand," he said.

Testimony is scheduled to begin Tuesday.

Opening statements proceeded despite a motion filed Sunday night by Miske's defense team. His attorneys argued that a new jury should be selected because Miske's half-brother John Stancil pleaded guilty after a jury had been assembled and sworn and Miske's daughter-in-law Delia Fabro Miske pleaded guilty after four days of jury selection.

Defense attorney Lynn Panagakos noted that Stancil pleaded guilty early Monday before the courthouse was even open to the public.

U.S. District Chief Judge Derrick Watson denied the motion.

Opinion

Hafa Adai!
Saipan Tribune
THE CNMI'S FIRST DAILY NEWSPAPER
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EDITORIAL

Another game of chicken: House averts shutdown, for now

With two funding bills passed just under the wire, the House under Speaker Mike Johnson has ensured that the federal government won't run out of operating funds until… March 1 and March 8, depending on the agency. His wacko right flank, predictably, was not happy.

We suppose it's better than the alternative of shutting the government down, in the same way that having a stale old bagel is technically better than having nothing to eat. It's not going to really fix the underlying issue here and it's certainly not something to take a victory round over.

While some observers might be confused as to why Congress is struggling mightily to do something relatively routine which is necessary for the government to continue operating, this befuddlement stems from a misunderstanding of the role of House Republicans as it exists now.

Despite their title, many of these legislators are not in that body to legislate, i.e. to engage in discussions and write legislation that will, in principle, improve their constituents' lives. They are there to wage culture war, burnish their personal image, clash with ideological opponents and fundraise for both reelection and personal projects.

We don't mean to say that anybody in the House is apolitical, but there certainly are members who are, at the end of the day, committed to finding paths to passable bills and keeping the body as a functional organ of government. Their numbers are probably dwindling, and who can blame them?

The others have made it so that this goal is all but unreachable, a self-reinforcing cycle as the body gets more and more dysfunctional. At this stage, it probably seems like an attractive prospect mainly if you don't intend to legislate.

So we'll carry on for another couple months with funded federal agencies, and then we'll have to play chicken once again with the lives of millions of federal workers, their families, and the innumerable people who rely on a multitude of government services seeming a distant concern to the people playing this game.

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Hey, I'm not running for President anymore! Well, maybe in four years!!!
TO FLORIDA
I LOST MOST OF MY Donors and Voters so I'm going home to be GOVERNOR! Desantis!
BOOTH DAMBLE KING FEATURES SYNDICATE/IWG

Misinformation isn't just coming from your cranky uncle on Facebook

By SUSAN MINICHIELLO
The Fulcrum

Susan Minichiello writes The Sift *newsletter for educators at the News Literacy Project.*

I see misinformation all the time. Scrolling through Instagram, I saw a musician I follow sharing false posts about the Israel-Hamas war. Out to eat at a restaurant, a server making friendly small talk shared true crime content she finds online—while rattling off names of accounts that I later discovered were conspiracy-minded. A friend of mine thinks the Infowars conspiracy theories site is a delight. And there's my relative who started entertaining the idea that the world is flat after watching YouTube videos.

Misinformation affects everything from our health decisions to our personal relationships to business to, of course, democracy. It's easy to get angry when we're confronted with misinformation—that's what it's designed to do—but learning how to sort fact from fiction online while also practicing empathy will go a long way in fixing the misinformation crisis.

And the News Literacy Project, where I now work after a career in journalism, can teach people how to identify credible news.

First, if you're fortunate enough not to live in a local news desert, you should get your information from your local newspaper, radio station or TV news programs. Beware of online "news" sites that are partisan propaganda. If they have very few or no local stories but plenty of politically charged articles, it's a red flag. Also, follow news outlets that adhere to journalism standards and ethics, such as being transparent about corrections. Quality local news not only empowers us individually, but studies show it's also good for democracy.

Second, when navigating difficult conversations where misinformation may come up, try practicing what NLP calls "PEP": patience, empathy and persistence. You can't convince people of anything in one heated conversation, but if you listen you can walk away with a better understanding of how they developed their beliefs.

"We don't all think the same," said one of my relatives, who refused to get a COVID-19 booster shot after seeing misinformation about how it might affect someone's hair.

I responded: "I'm not saying we need to think the same thing. I'm saying we need to know what's true before we agree or disagree,"

It's hard when someone you love is repeating falsehoods, but that doesn't mean they're not intelligent or they are a bad person. We're living in a system where social media platforms don't properly moderate content for misinformation and, in fact, incentivize its spread through outrage. Laws and regulations haven't caught up to how quickly artificial intelligence technologies—including misleading images, videos and posts—are being developed.

Additionally, remember that none of us are exempt from falling for misinformation. It's embarrassing, but it's happened to me too. During the early days of the pandemic, photos spread online of dolphins swimming in Venice canals. It seemed mesmerizing and magical. Of course, those photos later turned out to be false. And I felt like a fool – something to remember the next time I spar with a friend over misinformation.

It's a systemic problem. We can do our part to counter it by seeking out credible sources of news. We can keep in mind that it's easy to be fooled by falsehoods. And we can engage in tough, face-to-face conversations with the people we care about, but lead with empathy—not accusations.

One tactic that has helped me immensely—not just in countering misinformation I see online but also when talking through hot misinformation topics with loved ones—is to simply take ... a ... pause. This is actually a news literacy skill. Being news-literate means being able to identify credible information, which is often as simple as pausing to confirm whether something is true before sharing it online or in conversations.

It also means seeking out credible news sources like your local TV station or paper. By practicing news literacy skills, we'll be better equipped to find trustworthy information and engage in difficult conversations about conspiracy theories and misinformation.

During National News Literacy Week, which runs Jan. 22-26, you can learn how to push back on misinformation and empower yourself and your communities to seek quality, vetted information. Join us in our effort to build a national movement to advance the practice of news literacy throughout American society, creating better informed, more engaged and more empowered individuals—and ultimately a stronger democracy.

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The gig economy sucked in millennials like me. Will we ever get out?

By SARAH HUNTER SIMANSON
Los Angeles Times

Sarah Hunter Simanson is a Memphis-based freelance writer who received her MFA from Vermont College of Fine Arts and is working on her first novel.@sarahsimanson

I'm 32, and I haven't worked a "real" (full-time) job since I was 23 and finished my two-year commitment with Teach for America. Since 2013, I've piecemealed together part-time jobs that include private tutor, substitute teacher, fitness instructor, story time program leader and freelance writer.

For my generation, this trajectory isn't unusual: 45% of all freelancers are millennials, and almost half of all working millennials are freelancing. Now, with a resume that reads like a 2010s economist's cautionary tale, I'm colliding with the problems of part-time employment as a norm.

In 2013, after two years teaching seventh-grade writing, I decided to apply for master's programs and took on my first part-time gigs as a tutor and substitute teacher. At the time I didn't see myself as "underemployed"— a dreaded condition that parents, economists and journalists cautioned against (and which then applied to almost 20% of millennials). I did take the LSAT and consider following my mom's footsteps to law school. But, in line with many of my peers seeking fulfilling work, I ultimately chose to pursue my dream of being a writer. I was still on one of my parents' health insurance thanks to Obamacare, I had saved money while living at home during my time with Teach for America, and I knew I could keep working part-time while in school full-time to get my master's degree in creative writing.

At this point, I began teaching fitness classes in addition to tutoring. Gigging still felt normal and innocuous. I wasn't even deterred when I got my first IRS notification that I owed the government more taxes, unaware of the costs of being self-employed. I bemoaned my quarterly payment to the IRS, but I readjusted for it. I even felt responsible when I made my first very small, tax-deductible IRA contribution (which I could only afford because I still lived at home). At 24, not having paid leave, a 401k or the stability that comes with a salary felt normal, especially among most of my friends who were also in graduate school.

But a year later, I became a primary caretaker. Gigging's perks of flexibility and control became necessities when my mom was diagnosed with Stage 4 cancer. Working multiple part-time jobs was the only way I could care for her, stay in school and earn money. I helped her with daily tasks at home, managed her treatment schedule and attended every doctor's appointment, chemo treatment, scan and procedure.

That was only possible because I made my own schedule. I could teach a Pure Barre class at 5 or 6 a.m. (sometimes both), take my mom to chemo for her eight-hour infusion at 8 a.m., tutor in the afternoons and complete my coursework in the evenings.

During this period I married my husband, so I moved onto his health insurance before I turned 26, making use of the benefits he received with his full-time job at a big company because I still had none. Not long after, I got pregnant. To maintain some income, I resumed tutoring just weeks after my daughter was born, but at that point postpartum I still couldn't exercise, let alone teach a fitness class. So my two part-time jobs winnowed to one.

Simultaneously, my mom's health rapidly declined. I was sandwiched between taking care of a baby, being present for my mom and working with my students—trapped between the broken caregiving options in the U.S. Even after my mom died, and my focus shifted to my baby, it was hard to balance child care and work, especially without a grandparent regularly around to help mitigate the cost of a babysitter or fill in when one canceled. Once my daughter started preschool, that complicated our schedules with sick days, early-afternoon dismissal times, school holidays and summer break.

If my 20s were proof of our country's unsustainable workforce model and child-care and elder-care crises, the pandemic showed how quickly those issues could upend lives. In March 2020, my daughter's preschool closed, and I gave birth to my son. Like too many millennial women, I was forced to leave the workforce entirely to take care of them. It took more than two years before I could manage another part-time job as a freelance writer.

By then, I was too grateful for a gig to complain about the hollow foundation underpinning my work: the inconsistency, low and slow pay, instability and lack of benefits. Instead I continued to freelance, and I've occasionally returned to tutoring. I also found a part-time job working as the "story time lady" at my local bookstore, where I at least knew I'd get a regular paycheck, albeit a small one, every other Friday.

Financially, I need the higher, regular pay and benefits that come with a salaried, full-time job. But it's hard to find a good job, and if I get one, I don't know how I'll balance it with my responsibilities as a mom of young children in a country in which women like me often function as the social security net—the caretakers of the sick, the primary parents of the children. Even though I love my life, I wish I wasn't working multiple part-time jobs. I wish our home life didn't depend on my having the flexibility to deal with both small and urgent needs all the time.

Last year, 64 million people (4 million more than the year before) worked freelance in the gig economy. When 38% of our workforce is in this situation—and contributing more than$1.27 trillion in annual earnings to the economy—the country has a responsibility to make that work more sustainable. Our peer countries have done that by widely providing workers support, such as family caregiving leave, parental leave (including guaranteed paid maternity leave), pension credits for caregivers, sick leave and paid vacation; some are offering or considering income protections for self-employed workers.

This month, the Department of Labor issued a rule that companies have to treat some workers as employees, not independent contractors, based on new criteria meant to ensure people are being properly compensated. While that is a step forward, it's not enough (and it's likely to face lawsuits). Our country needs much bigger changes to make participating in the gig economy a viable, long-term choice instead of the all-consuming sinkhole I'm not sure I'll ever escape.

Understanding the epic collapse of Ron DeSantis

By SCOTT MAXWELL
Orlando Sentinel

It's hard to overstate just how epic this collapse was.

Less than a year ago, Ron DeSantis was the next big thing. Wall Street loved him. So did the GOP faithful.

Polls suggested he was more popular among Republicans than Donald Trump. And just eight months ago, DeSantis had twice as much campaign cash.

But Ron DeSantis had a problem: Ron DeSantis.

The more he campaigned, the less people liked him—namely members of his own party. He was awkward, entitled and angry.

Anger is actually a quality some people crave in their politicians. But DeSantis was angry about weird things—like Disney World.

While Donald Trump and Joe Biden argued over the economy, DeSantis was screaming about "wokeism." And drag queens.

His campaign team thought it was all a hoot-and-and-half. But Republicans in Iowa and New Hampshire just thought it was odd.

DeSantis' trolling tactics worked in Florida where he was able to hide from mainstream media and exist primarily in a bubble full of sycophantic legislators and cheerleaders with websites. But most Americans want to see their presidential candidates put on their big-kid pants every now and again and have serious discussions about serious issues.

By last week, DeSantis admitted he'd goofed by hiding from serious journalists. Politico detailed the DeSantis epiphany in its piece: "DeSantis regrets anti-media strategy: 'I should have gone on everything.'"

But America had already seen enough.

And by the time DeSantis tucked his tail and ate his own words Sunday, endorsing the very man he'd spent weeks debasing, he'd managed to do something his supporters never imagined—damage his own brand.

See, many politicians mount their first campaign for president without really expecting to win. Instead, they just want to introduce themselves to voters and boost their name ID for the next time. But DeSantis managed to leave the race worse than he started.

A year ago, his PAC claimed he was the frontrunner with 48% of the vote. Today, some polls show him with less than 8%.

A year ago he was an heir apparent. Today, he just has an air of desperation.

Two years ago, I thought DeSantis might be unstoppable. I'd seen him build a base of support unlike anything we'd seen in modern Florida politics.

But then, something changed right around the time of his re-election—he started to believe he was invincible, almost God-like.

That's not my opinion. That was actually the point of the bizarre "God made a fighter" ad that he and his wife put out in November of 2022—a two-minute video that suggested they believed God put DeSantis on earth to win elections. It was simply … weird.

As was the glitchy Twitter Space campaign announcement that followed.

After that, DeSantis tried a "Make America Florida" tactic that basically asked the rest of the country to look at the Sunshine State and see if they liked what they saw. The answer seemed to be no.

Trump seized on the state's sky-high insurance rates and asked: Who wants that?

And when Americans looked at the other headlines coming out of Florida, they saw stories about school districts removing books from library shelves and state government trying to tell private companies how to run their business when it came to everything from employee training to social media. Censorship and big-government control aren't conservative values.

Just as significant, DeSantis kept losing his war-on-woke legal battles. DeSantis originally ran as the anti-chaos candidate—a strategy that I thought could've been effective, particularly with Wall Street execs who'd had enough of Hurricane Trump and were craving stability. But the more everyone looked at Florida, the more they realized that Hurricane Ron was just as chaotic as Hurricane Don. That's when the campaign checks started drying up.

In the final, desperate stages of the DeSantis descent, he tried dredging up old debates that he thought made him popular, resurrecting rants against things like face masks and Anthony Fauci. No topic was too old or too odd—as evidenced by one of the final headlines his campaign generated: "Ron DeSantis defends George W. Bush response to Hurricane Katrina: The 'media' should have blamed the local officials."

By the end, DeSantis didn't even have the support of his fellow Floridians. When perennial fence-sitter Marco Rubio finally announced he was joining Rick Scott in backing Trump over DeSantis, everyone knew the die was cast.

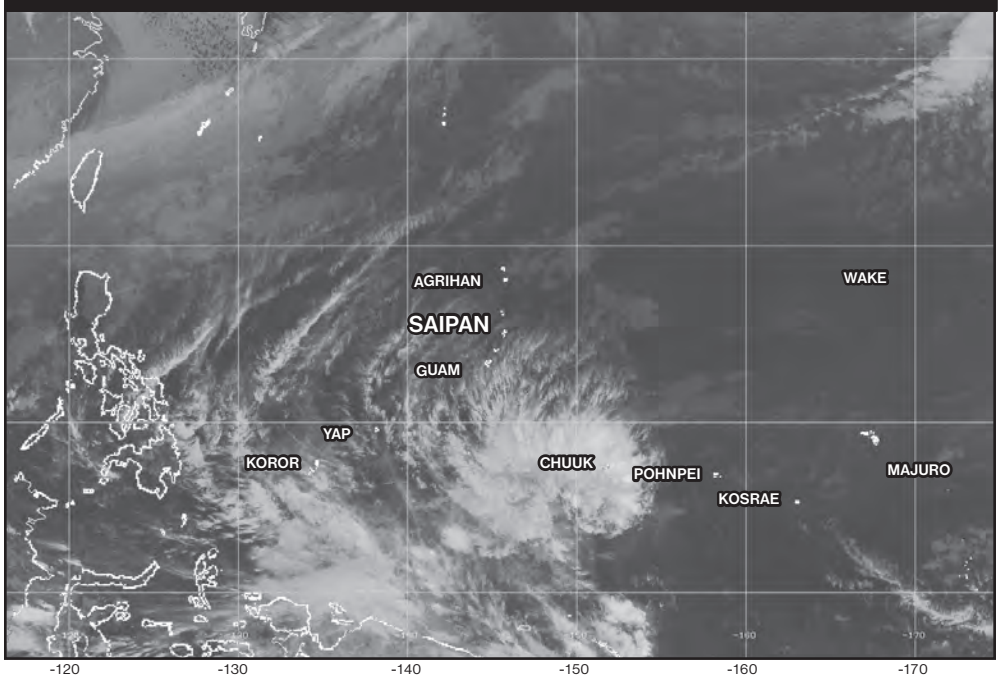
And the reality became evident: The best moments of the DeSantis 2024 campaign were before it ever began.

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY
Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers. Northeast winds 15 to 20 mph.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.	Partly cloudy with a 20 percent chance of showers.
86 / 74°	86 / 76°	86 / 76°	86 / 76°	86 / 76°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 8:00 AM TUESDAY, JANUARY 23, 2024

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite shows mostly cloudy skies and scattered light showers moving through the Marianas Waters. The buoys reveal combined seas of 6 to 8 feet composed of north swell, east swell and wind waves.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: https://www.weather.gov/gum/

MICRONESIA		▲ ▼ °F
Guam and Rota	Partly Cloudy	84° / 77°
Palau	Thunderstorms	84° / 78°
Yap	Thunderstorms	85° / 79°
Chuuk	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°
Pohnpei	Partly Cloudy	85° / 80°
Kosrae	Thunderstorms	84° / 80°
Majuro	Mostly Sunny	84° / 79°

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:47 AM	6:10 PM
Thursday	6:47 AM	6:11 PM
Friday	6:46 AM	6:11 PM
Saturday	6:46 AM	6:12 PM
Sunday	6:46 AM	6:12 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	5:30 AM	4:50 PM
Thursday	-	6:20 AM	5:45 PM
Friday	-	7:06 AM	6:38 PM
Saturday	-	7:48 AM	7:29 PM
Sunday	-	8:25 AM	8:17 PM

AROUND THE GLOBE		▲ ▼ °F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy	79° / 70°
Beijing	Fair/Wind	28° / 14°
Hong Kong	Light Rain	59° / 41°
Honolulu	Partly Cloudy	79° / 70°
London	Partly Cloudy	45° / 35°
Los Angeles	Cloudy	57° / 54°
Manila	Mostly Cloudy	87° / 77°
Melbourne	Partly Cloudy	78° / 58°
Miami	Partly Cloudy	77° / 63°
New York	Cloudy	37° / 25°
Osaka	Partly Cloudy	55° / 40°
Paris	Mostly Cloudy	55° / 45°
Busan	Sunny	36° / 18°
Rome	Rain	58° / 47°
Salem	Rain	58° / 41°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy	55° / 44°
Seoul	Sunny	19° / 6°
Tokyo	Partly Cloudy	57° / 44°
Washington, DC	Fair	39° / 22°

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY		FEET
12:58 AM	Low Tide	-0.52
8:23 AM	High Tide	1.62
1:33 PM	Low Tide	1.11
6:01 PM	High Tide	1.61

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 1, 2024

DEPARTURES

SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)

UA076	9:50AM	10:35AM	Daily

SAIPAN- NARITA (NRT)

UA824	7:05AM	9:45AM	1, 3, 5

GUAM-MANILA (MNL)

PR 111	5:55AM	7:55AM	Daily
UA193	7:50PM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Palau
UA183	7:55PM	9:50PM	Daily

SAIPAN-MANILA (MNL)

OZ626/703	3:10AM	10:30PM	4, 7 via ICN
7C3403/2305	4:40AM	10:20PM	Daily
UA076/183	9:50AM	9:50PM	Daily via Guam
UA076/193	9:50AM	11:50PM	2, 5 via Guam, Palau

SAIPAN-INCHEON (ICN)

TW308	2:15AM	6:10AM	Daily
OZ626	3:10AM	6:55AM	4,7
7C3403	4:40AM	8:35AM	Daily
7C3405	4:35PM	8:25PM	Daily

ARRIVALS

GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN

UA174	8:00AM	8:45AM	Daily

NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN

UA825	9:25PM	2:00AM+1	2, 4, 7

MANILA (MNL)-GUAM

UA189	00:40AM	6:30AM	3, 6
PR110	10:05PM	3:55AM+1	Daily
UA192	10:40PM	6:30AM+1	2, 5 via Palau
UA184	10:55PM	4:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6, 7

MANILA (MNL)-SAIPAN

UA189/174	00:40AM	8:45AM+1	3, 6 via Guam
OZ702/625	12:05PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6 via ICN
UA192/174	10:40PM	8:45AM+1	2, 5 via Palau, Guam
UA184/174	10:55PM	8:45AM+1	1, 3, 4, 6,7 via Guam
7C2306/3406	11:15PM	3:30PM+1	Daily

INCHEON (ICN)-SAIPAN

7C3406	10:10AM	3:30PM	Daily
TW307	7:45PM	1:15AM+1	Daily
7C3404	10:15PM	3:35AM+1	Daily
OZ625	8:20PM	1:40AM+1	3, 6

LEGEND: Days: Monday (1), Tuesday (2), Wednesday (3), Thursday (4), Friday (5), Saturday (6) and Sunday (7); UA United Airlines; PR, Philippine Airlines; TW, T'Way Air; OZ, Asiana Airlines; 7C, Jeju Air; BX, Air Busan • ETD: Estimated Time of Departure; ETA: Estimated Time of Arrival. *(The Saipan Tribune is not responsible for any changes in the schedule.)*

STAR MARIANAS AIR, INC.

FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF JANUARY 2, 2024

SAIPAN TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1301	SAIPAN	ROTA	08:30	09:00	Daily
1302	SAIPAN	ROTA	10:30	11:00	Daily
1303	SAIPAN	ROTA	15:30	16:00	Daily

ROTA TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3101	ROTA	SAIPAN	9:30	10:00	Daily
3102	ROTA	SAIPAN	11:30	12:00	Saturday & Sunday
3103	ROTA	SAIPAN	13:30	14:00	Monday To Friday
3104	ROTA	SAIPAN	16:30	17:00	Daily

ROTA TO GUAM

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
3401	ROTA	GUAM	11:30	12:00	Monday To Friday

GUAM TO ROTA

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
4301	GUAM	ROTA	12:30	13:00	Monday To Friday

SAIPAN TO TINIAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
1201	SAIPAN	TINIAN	7:30	7:45	Daily
1202	SAIPAN	TINIAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
1203	SAIPAN	TINIAN	9:00	9:15	Daily
1204	SAIPAN	TINIAN	10:00	10:15	Daily
1206	SAIPAN	TINIAN	14:00	14:15	Daily
1207	SAIPAN	TINIAN	15:00	15:15	Daily
1208	SAIPAN	TINIAN	16:00	16:15	Daily
1209	SAIPAN	TINIAN	17:00	17:15	Daily

TINIAN TO SAIPAN

FLIGHT #	FROM	TO	DEPARTS	ARRIVES	FREQUENCY
2101	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:00	8:15	Daily
2102	TINIAN	SAIPAN	8:30	8:45	Daily
2103	TINIAN	SAIPAN	9:30	9:45	Daily
2104	TINIAN	SAIPAN	10:30	10:45	Daily
2106	TINIAN	SAIPAN	14:30	14:45	Daily
2107	TINIAN	SAIPAN	15:30	15:45	Daily
2108	TINIAN	SAIPAN	16:30	16:45	Daily
2109	TINIAN	SAIPAN	17:30	17:45	Daily

Business

DUE TO GROUNDING OF BOEING MAX 9 JETS

United Airlines expects to lose money in first quarter

AP

Two United Airlines Boeing 737s are parked at the gate at the Fort Lauderdale-Hollywood International Airport in Fort Lauderdale, Fla., on July 7, 2022.

United Airlines said Monday it will lose money in the first three months of this year as it deals with the grounding of its Boeing 737 Max 9 planes after a panel blew out of a Max jetliner this month.

United said it expects to lose between 35 cents and 85 cents per share in the first quarter.

The airline said, however, that it will recover to earn a full-year profit between $9 and $11 per share. Analysts were expecting $9.48 per share, according to FactSet.

The Chicago-based airline based its forecasts on an assumption that the Max 9s will be grounded through the month of January, but not longer. Federal regulators have refused to put a timeline on letting the planes fly again, saying it will happen only when they believe the planes are safe.

United reported that despite higher revenue fourth-quarter profit fell 29%, to $600 million. The results were dragged down by a 28% increase in labor costs, partly reflecting a new union contract with pilots.

United and Alaska Airlines have canceled hundreds of flights since the Federal Aviation Administration grounded their Max 9 jets after a panel called a door plug blew off the side of an Alaska plane 16,000 feet (4,900 meters) above Oregon on Jan. 5. Investigators with the National Transportation Safety Board said they were examining whether bolts on the panel were missing or broke off.

United has 79 Max 9s in its fleet, which numbers around 1,000 planes, not counting those used by regional affiliates.

Concern about door plugs on Boeing planes widened Monday, when the FAA recommended that airlines inspect the same panel on Boeing 737-900ERs, a predecessor to the Max 9. The FAA said some airlines have inspected their 900ERs during maintenance "and have noted findings with bolts."

United has about 130 of the older planes. The airline said Monday inspections on the 900ERs should not interfere with its operations.

The airline's fourth-quarter profit compared with $843 million a year earlier. The company said it earned $2 a share after adjusting for one-time items, which beat the $1.69 per share mean forecast of 16 analysts surveyed by FactSet.

Revenue rose 10% to $13.63 billion, slightly better than analysts expected. Sales of premium seats and services did even better, jumping 16%.

For all of 2023, United earned $2.62 billion, more than tripling its 2022 profit of $737 million.

Airline officials were scheduled to discuss the results with analysts and reporters on Tuesday.

Shares of United Airlines Holdings Inc. fell 1% in regular trading, but rose 6% after more than two hours of extended trading following release of the financial results and forecasts. ***(AP)***

BUSINESS BRIEFS

Appeals court reverses judge's ruling, orders appointment of independent examiner in FTX bankruptcy

DOVER, Del. (AP)—A federal appeals court has ordered the appointment of an independent examiner in the bankruptcy case of FTX amid concerns about widespread fraud preceding the collapse of the multibillion-dollar cryptocurrency exchange. A three-judge panel in Philadelphia issued the ruling Friday in an appeal filed by the U.S. bankruptcy trustee, who serves as a government watchdog in Chapter 11 reorganizations. Lawyers for the trustee had argued that FTX's financial affairs and business operations, including allegations of unprecedented fraud leading to its collapse, should be reviewed by a disinterested person, not left to an internal investigation. U.S. Bankruptcy Judge John Dorsey denied the trustee's request last February. He agreed with FTX and its official committee of unsecured creditors that an examiner's work would be too costly and would duplicate investigations already under way by FTX's new leadership, the creditors committee and several federal agencies. Dorsey also expressed confidence in John Ray III, who was appointed by FTX co-founder Sam Bankman-Fried as the company's new CEO on the same day the company sought bankruptcy protection. Bankman-Fried is awaiting sentencing in March after being convicted in November on wire-fraud and conspiracy charges. Several other former FTX executives have pleaded guilty to similar charges. Prosecutors said Bankman-Fried siphoned billions of dollars from customer accounts at FTX into his cryptocurrency hedge fund, Alameda Research. The appeals court reversed Dorsey's ruling, agreeing with the trustee that the bankruptcy code mandates the appointment of an examiner.

Japanese carmaker that faked safety tests sees long wait to reopen factories

TOKYO (AP)—A Japanese automaker that cheated on safety tests for decades said Monday it doesn't expect to resume shipping cars any time soon. The Japanese government ordered a subsidiary of Toyota to halt production of its entire lineup after reports of faked safety test results emerged last year. The Daihatsu Motor Co. skipped mandatory safety tests by copying data from testing on one side of cars to the other, and used timers to ensure airbags went off in tests, a review found. No major accidents have been reported in connection with the cheating, but the news has raised serious questions about oversight at Daihatsu, as well as its corporate parent Toyota. Japanese regulators approved five of the company's models on Friday after more testing, but Daihatsu executives said its factories will remain shuttered as it waits on suppliers. "We face a very tough road ahead in winning back customer trust about safety and security," corporate manager Keita Ide said Monday, stressing that customers felt betrayed. He said the company is working on a plan to prevent cheating in the future. Daihatsu is known for kei cars, or light automobiles, including the popular Daihatsu Tanto "kei," or small, car. It also produces the Toyota Raize hybrid sport-utility vehicle, also sold as the Daihatsu Rocky. An investigation including third-party experts found 174 cases of faked tests affecting dozens of models, including cars sold under the Toyota Motor Corp. nameplate. The review found that cheating went back 30 years. The scandal began after a whistleblower came forward in April last year. Daihatsu has apologized and promised sweeping reforms of its corporate culture. Daihatsu President Soichiro Okudaira has attributed the cheating to pressure on workers to meet tight deadlines. Daihatsu said there may be recalls, although none have been announced yet. Japanese media reports said the recalls are likely to total more than 300,000 vehicles.

Canada capping foreign student visas to ease housing pressures as the cost of living soars

TORONTO (AP)—Canada on Monday announced a two-year cap on international student visas to ease the pressure on housing, health care and other services at a time of record immigration.

Immigration Minister Marc Miller said that there will be a 35% reduction in new study visas in 2024. He said that the international students program has been exploited by institutions offering "sham" degrees, putting pressure on housing and health care.

"It's a bit of a mess, and it's time to rein it in," Miller said.

The number of new visas handed out will be capped at 364,000. Nearly 560,000 such visas were issued last year.

Prime Minister Justin Trudeau's Cabinet retreat in Montreal this week will prioritize affordability and housing, according to a government statement.

The government said that there are about 1 million foreign students in the country now, and without any intervention this number would keep increasing. The total number of foreign students is more than three times what it was a decade ago.

Miller said that officials have been working on stabilizing the number of people entering the country yearly as housing pressures mount.

Canada grew by about 1 million people last year, reaching a record of 40 million, as many Canadians struggle with an increased cost of living, including rents and mortgages.

"You cannot bring in 1.25 million people a year but only create 300,000 homes on average and think you're not going to have a structural problem on housing," TD Bank Group chief economist Beata Caranci said at the Economic Club of Canada's 2024 Annual Economic Outlook earlier this month.

The immigration minister said that there are unscrupulous schools that accept high tuition fees from foreign students without offering a solid education in return. In some cases, the schools are a way into Canada for students who can parlay their visas into permanent residencies.

"It is not the intention of this program to have sham commerce degrees or business degrees that are sitting on top of a massage parlor that someone doesn't even go to and then they come into the province and drive an Uber," Miller said.

"If you need a dedicated channel for Uber drivers in Canada, I can design that, but that isn't the intention of the international student program," he said.

The leader of the opposition Conservative Party of Canada, Pierre Poilievre, called it a mess and blamed Trudeau for granting study permits to tens of thousands of students who attend fake schools.

"People are still somewhat shell-shocked and responding to the steep inflationary increases of the past," said Nelson Wiseman, a political science professor at the University of Toronto

"There is some debate over the impact of immigration and the massive increase in foreign students on the housing market and rents. The overall view of economists and the public is that there is a connection. The student influx has largely impacted rents and not house prices as few students buy houses."

Wiseman said immigration targets will continue to remain high if the opposition Conservatives win the next election, which is likely to be held in 2025.

"The policies are driven by economic realities—an aging population dependent on government-funded social services such as health care," he said.

Nation

SC allows federal agents to cut razor wire Texas installed on border

AP

Concertina wire lines the path as members of Congress tour an area near the Texas-Mexico border, Jan. 3, 2024, in Eagle Pass, Texas.

WASHINGTON (AP)—A divided Supreme Court on Monday allowed Border Patrol agents to resume cutting for now razor wire that Texas installed along a stretch of the U.S.-Mexico border that is at the center of an escalating standoff between the Biden administration and the state over immigration enforcement.

The 5-4 vote clears the way for Border Patrol agents to cut or clear out concertina wire that Texas has put along the banks of the Rio Grande to deter migrants from entering the U.S. illegally. Some migrants have been injured by the sharp wire and the Justice Department has argued the barrier impedes the U.S. government's ability to patrol the border, including coming to the aid of migrants in need of help.

None of the justices provided any explanation for their vote. The one-page order is a victory for the Biden administration while the lawsuit over the wire continues.

Texas Gov. Greg Abbott had authorized the wire, one of a series of aggressive measures the three-term Republican has taken on the border in the name of curbing illegal crossings from Mexico. His spokesman said the absence of razor wire and other deterrents encourages migrants to risk unsafe crossings and makes the job of Texas border personnel more difficult.

"This case is ongoing, and Governor Abbott will continue fighting to defend Texas' property and its constitutional authority to secure the border," Abbott spokesman Andrew Mahaleris said.

The White House applauded the order, which was handed down after a federal appeals court last month had forced federal agents to stop cutting the concertina wire.

"Texas' political stunts, like placing razor wire near the border, simply make it harder and more dangerous for frontline personnel to do their jobs," White House spokesperson Angelo Fernández Hernández said.

The concertina wire stretches for roughly 30 miles (48 kilometers) near the border city of Eagle Pass, where earlier this month the Texas Military Department seized control of a city-owned park and began denying access to Border Patrol agents.

Eagle Park has become one of the busiest spots on the southern U.S. border for migrants illegally crossing from Mexico. Abbott has said Texas won't allow Border Patrol agents into Shelby Park anymore, having expressed frustration over what he says are migrants illegally entering through Eagle Pass and then federal agents loading them onto buses.

Abbott also has authorized installing floating barriers in the Rio Grande near Eagle Pass and allowed troopers to arrest and jail thousands of migrants on trespassing charges. The administration also is challenging those actions in federal court.

In court papers, the administration said the wire impedes Border Patrol agents from reaching migrants as they cross the river and that, in any case, federal immigration law trumps Texas' own efforts to stem the flow of migrants into the country.

Texas officials have argued that federal agents cut the wire to help groups crossing illegally through the river before taking them in for processing.

Chief Justice John Roberts and Justices Amy Coney Barrett, Ketanji Brown Jackson, Elena Kagan and Sonia Sotomayor sided with the administration. Justices Samuel Alito, Neil Gorsuch, Brett Kavanaugh and Clarence Thomas voted with Texas.

ACROSS THE NATION

Suspect in killing of 8 people in suburban Chicago fatally shot himself in Texas, police say

CHICAGO (AP)—A man suspected of shooting and killing eight people in suburban Chicago is believed to have fatally shot himself after a confrontation with Texas law enforcement officials, police said late Monday. Police in Joliet said on Facebook that at about 8:30 p.m. central time 23-year-old Romeo Nance was located by US Marshals near Natalia, Texas, and that after a confrontation Nance shot himself. Nance is suspected of shooting and killing eight people at three locations in the Chicago suburbs, sparking a search that left neighbors on edge earlier Monday as police said he was still on the loose. Police in Will County in Illinois and the city of Joliet previously said they did not know of a motive for the killings, but said Nance knew the victims. The FBI's fugitive task force had been assisting local police in the search for the suspect, Joliet Police Chief William Evans said. The victims were found Sunday and Monday at three separate residences, authorities told reporters earlier Monday evening, several hours after warning on social media that Nance should be considered "armed and dangerous."

Flash floods inundate homes and overturn cars in San Diego as heavy rains sweep through much of US

SAN DIEGO (AP)—Flash floods inundated homes and overturned cars in San Diego on Monday as torrential rain swept through a large swath of the U.S., toppling trees and overflowing streets across California. Early morning flooding hit the town of Guerneville, north of San Francisco, where a creek overflowed after more than 4 inches (10 cm) of rain fell in 24 hours. The local school district canceled classes for the day. Later, the weather system unleashed a severe punch on the south end of the state in the second major rain event of the winter. Floodwaters swept away vehicles and caused cars to pile on top of each other in parts of San Diego. Several feet of water inundated the Mountain View, Shelltown and Southcrest neighborhoods, and multiple highways including Interstate 15. Eddie Ochoa, a resident of San Diego, said it was just sprinkling when he and his sister went out for breakfast Monday morning. When they returned to their family-owned auto body shop, the entire block was flooded and his sister's parked car had been washed away. "All that happened within an hour," Ochoa said, guessing that the sewers had backed up. They later found his sister's car about three miles (4.8 kilometers) down the street. "It's never been that bad, ever. It's crazy," he said.

Families sue Kentucky gun shop that sold AR-15 used in 2023 bank shooting that killed 5

LOUISVILLE, Ky. (AP)—The Kentucky gun shop that sold an assault weapon to a man who used it to kill five co-workers and wrote in his journal the gun was "so easy" to buy is facing a lawsuit filed Monday from survivors and families of the victims. The civil suit filed in Louisville alleges River City Firearms should have been more suspicious of the sale and noticed red flags when Connor Sturgeon bought the gun six days before the April 10 shooting. Sturgeon walked into Old National Bank and opened fire on co-workers who were having a morning meeting, killing five and injuring several others. A responding police officer was also shot. Sturgeon, 25, struggled with mental illness and wrote in a journal he was "very sick," according to an extensive Louisville police report on the shootings released in November. River City Firearms is a federally licensed dealer, which means sellers there are "trained to spot individuals who ... may have nefarious intentions," according to the lawsuit. Patrons inside the store said Sturgeon had little knowledge of firearms and appeared embarrassed during the purchase, the lawsuit said. The shop has a "legal duty" to withhold a sale from a buyer who it can reasonably tell might be a danger to others, the suit said. The owners of the store should know that AR-15-style weapons like the one Sturgeon bought "have become the go-to weapon for young men intent on causing mass destruction," according to the lawsuit. which was first reported by the Courier Journal.

Haley hopes to stop Trump's march to nomination in New Hampshire

LACONIA, N.H. (AP)—As the last major challenger in Donald Trump's way to the Republican nomination, Nikki Haley is hoping New Hampshire voters feel so strongly about keeping the former president away from the White House that they turn out to support her in large numbers.

"America does not do coronations," Haley said at a VFW hall in Franklin, joined by her daughter and son-in-law. "Let's show all of the media class and the political class that we've got a different plan in mind, and let's show the country what we can do."

It's an uphill battle for the former U.N. ambassador and South Carolina governor. Most conservatives want to give Trump another chance at beating President Joe Biden despite Trump's 2020 election loss and the 91 felony charges he faces in four separate indictments.

With voting about to begin in New Hampshire, almost every top Republican has lined up behind Trump. Polls in New Hampshire suggest he leads Haley in a state uniquely suited to her strengths, though his lead is narrower than the 30-point blowout he scored in the Iowa caucuses.

Haley told reporters on Monday that she is expecting a stronger outcome than Iowa.

"This is a building game for us. This has always been that," she said. "We feel very good about it."

Trump held what he said would be his last rally before the election Monday night. He started the day in New York for his defamation trial after an earlier jury determined he had sexually abused a columnist in the 1990s, but the session was canceled due to a juror's illness.

Trump was joined onstage Monday night by three of his former opponents who have now endorsed him: South Carolina Sen. Tim Scott, tech entrepreneur Vivek Ramaswamy and North Dakota Gov. Doug Burgum. The show of force—interrupted several times by climate change protesters, who were shouted down and removed—is part of a broader effort by Trump's team to lock up the primary and demonstrate the party is rallying around him.

"Every day the Republican Party is becoming more and more unified," Trump told several hundred people in a steamy, packed hotel ballroom just hours before the first votes were to be cast. "Now is the time for the Republican Party to come together. We have to unify."

He alluded to former Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis' departure from the race on Sunday but didn't name him.

Asia

UN: Taliban is enforcing restrictions on single, unaccompanied Afghan women

AP

A Taliban fighter stands guard as women wait to receive food rations distributed by a humanitarian aid group, in Kabul, Afghanistan, on May 23, 2023.

ISLAMABAD (AP)—The Taliban are restricting Afghan women's access to work, travel and health care if they are unmarried or don't have a male guardian, according to a U.N report published Monday.

In one incident, officials from the Vice and Virtue Ministry advised a woman to get married if she wanted to keep her job at a health care facility, saying it was inappropriate for an unwed woman to work, it said.

The Taliban have barred women from most areas of public life and stopped girls from going to school beyond the sixth grade as part of harsh measures they imposed after taking power in 2021, despite initially promising more moderate rule.

They have also shut down beauty parlors and started enforcing a dress code, arresting women who don't comply with their interpretation of hijab, or Islamic headscarf. In May 2022, the Taliban issued a decree calling for women to only show their eyes and recommending they wear the head-to-toe burqa, similar to restrictions during the Taliban's previous rule between 1996 and 2001.

The U.N. spokesman, asked for Secretary-General Antonio Guterres' reaction to the latest bans, replied: "Horror!" Stephane Dujarric added: "It must be unimaginable to have to live there."

In its latest quarterly report, covering October to December last year, the U.N. Assistance Mission in Afghanistan said the Taliban are cracking down on Afghan women who are single or don't have a male guardian, or mahram, accompanying them.

There are no official laws about male guardianship in Afghanistan, but the Taliban have said women cannot move around or travel a certain distance without a man who is related to her by blood or marriage.

Three female health care workers were detained last October because they were going to work without a mahram. They were released after their families signed a written guarantee that they would not repeat the act, the report said.

In Paktia province, the Vice and Virtue Ministry has stopped women without mahrams from accessing health facilities since December. It visits health facilities in the province to ensure compliance.

The ministry, which serves as the Taliban's morality police, is also enforcing hijab and mahram requirements when women visit public places, offices and education institutes through checkpoints and inspections.

Modi opens Hindu temple built on ruins on razed mosque, in political triumph for Modi

AYODHYA, India (AP)—Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi opened a controversial Hindu temple Monday that was built on the ruins of a razed historic mosque—a political triumph for the populist leader who is seeking to transform the country from a secular democracy into a Hindu state.

The temple, dedicated to Hinduism's Lord Ram, sits on a site in the northern city of Ayodhya where Hindu mobs tore down a mosque three decades ago. Its fraught history is still an open wound for many Muslims, who have increasingly come under attack by Hindu nationalist groups. Some see the temple as the biggest example yet of the rise of Hindu supremacy under Modi's tenure.

Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party and other Hindu nationalist groups have portrayed the temple's consecration as central to their vision of reclaiming Hindu pride, which they say was suppressed during centuries of Mogul rule and British colonialism. He and his party hope that opening the temple—which millions of Hindus who worship the deity had demanded—will help catapult the prime minister to a record third successive term in elections expected this spring.

But with the temple still under construction, critics accuse Modi of a hurried opening to woo voters.

And analysts say the pomp-filled display led by the government marks a key moment in India's history, showing the extent to which the line between religion and state has eroded under Modi. That distinction was seen by India's founding fathers as crucial to maintaining the country's communal cohesion.

On Monday, the prime minister, dressed in a traditional kurta tunic, led the opening ceremony as Hindu priests chanted hymns inside the temple's inner sanctum, where a 1.3-meter (4.3-foot) stone sculpture of Lord Ram was installed last week. A priest blew a conch to mark the temple's opening, and Modi placed a lotus flower in front of the black stone statue, decked in intricate gold ornaments and holding a golden bow and arrow. He later prostrated before it.

World

US Navy: Iran directly involved in Yemen Houthi rebel ship attacks

JERUSALEM (AP)—Iran is "very directly involved" in ship attacks that Yemen's Houthi rebels have carried out during Israel's war against Hamas, the U.S. Navy's top Mideast commander told The Associated Press on Monday.

Vice Adm. Brad Cooper, the head of the Navy's 5th Fleet, stopped short of saying Tehran directed individual attacks by the Houthis in the Red Sea and the Gulf of Aden.

However, Cooper acknowledged that attacks associated with Iran have expanded from previously threatening just the Persian Gulf and its Strait of Hormuz into waters across the wider Middle East.

"Clearly, the Houthi actions, probably in terms of their attacks on merchant shipping, are the most significant that we've seen in two generations," he told the AP in a telephone interview. "The facts simply are that they're attacking the international community; thus, the international response I think you've seen."

Iran's mission to the United Nations and the Houthi leadership in Yemen's capital, Sanaa, didn't respond to a request for comment. However, the Houthis later claimed to have attacked a U.S.-flagged vessel, something that the 5th Fleet dismissed as "patently false."

Since November, the Iranian-backed Houthis have launched at least 34 attacks on shipping through the waterways leading up to Egypt's Suez Canal, a vital route for energy and cargo coming from Asia and the Middle East onward to Europe.

The Houthis, a Shiite rebel group that's held Sanaa since 2014 and been at war with a Saudi-led coalition backing Yemen's exiled government since 2015, link their attacks to the Israel-Hamas war. However, the ships they've targeted increasingly have tenuous links to Israel — or none at all.

In recent days, the U.S. has launched seven rounds of airstrikes on Houthi military sites, targeting air bases under the rebels' control and suspected missile launch sites.

However, risks for the global economy remain as many ships continue to bypass that route for a longer trip around Africa's southern tip. That meant lower revenue for Egypt through the Suez Canal, a vital source of hard currency for the country's troubled economy, as well as higher costs for shipping that could push up global inflation.

As Cooper took command of the 5th Fleet in 2021, the threat to shipping focused primarily around the Persian Gulf and its narrow mouth, the Strait of Hormuz, through which a fifth of all oil traded passes. A series of attacks blamed on Iran and ship seizures by Tehran followed the collapse of Iran's nuclear deal with world powers.

In his interview with the AP, the Navy commander acknowledged the threat from Iran's proxies and that its distribution of weapons extended from the Red Sea out to the far reaches of the Indian Ocean. The U.S. has blamed Iran for recent drone attacks on shipping, and a U.S.-owned cargo vessel came under attack from the Houthis in the Gulf of Aden last week.

So far, Iran hasn't become directly involved in fighting either Israel or the U.S. since the war in Gaza began on Oct. 7. However, Cooper maintained Iran had been directly fueling the Houthi attacks on shipping.

"What I'll say is Iran is clearly funding, they're resourcing, they are supplying and they're providing training," Cooper said. "They're obviously very directly involved. There's no secret there."

Russia clashes with US, Ukraine supporters, ruling out any peace plan backed by Kyiv and the West

UNITED NATIONS (AP)—Russia's foreign minister clashed with the United States and Ukraine's supporters at a U.N. meeting Monday where Moscow ruled out any peace plan backed by Kyiv and the West, and China warned that further global chaos could impact the slowing global economy.

Sergey Lavrov, Russia's top diplomat, claimed that Ukrainian forces have been "a complete failure" on the battlefield and are "incapable" of defeating or weakening Russia.

He told the U.N. Security Council that Moscow is always ready to negotiate peace, but he claimed peace plans presented by Ukraine and its Western "masters" are "only used as cover to continue war and continue getting money from Western taxpayers."

"All of these formulas are a road to nowhere, and the sooner Washington, London, Paris and Brussels realize this the better for Ukraine and the West," he said, warning that their "crusade against Russia has already created new, clear, reputational and existential risks."

U.S. deputy ambassador Robert Wood dismissed Lavrov's claims as "just blatant disinformation" and countered that it was Russia's Feb. 24, 2022 invasion of Ukraine that started the war, and it is President Vladimir Putin 's "single-minded pursuit of the obliteration of Ukraine and subjugation of its people that is prolonging it."

"Russia's imperialist designs are obvious," and "for Russia, anything other than capitulation—total capitulation by Ukraine is the only solution, and that's just not acceptable to the international community," Wood said. stressing that the war could end tomorrow if Moscow withdrew hundreds of thousands of troops in Ukraine's internationally recognized territory.

Russia called the council meeting to again sharply criticize Western military aid to Ukraine. Just before it started, diplomats from more than 40 countries surrounded Ukraine's U.N. Ambassador Sergiy Kyslytsya who read a joint statement underscoring Russia's "hypocrisy" in criticizing lawful arms transfers to help Ukraine defend itself.

Ukraine's supporters called Monday's meeting another Russian attempt "to distract from its war of aggression," and they condemned military support to Moscow—drones from Iran and ballistic missiles from North Korea—in violation of U.N. sanctions, as well as military equipment from Belarus.

The council heard many calls for stepped up peace efforts, and there was growing concern from Russia's ally, China, about the increasing threat to global security from the ongoing war in Ukraine at the same time that Israel and Hamas are at war in Gaza following the militant group's surprise attacks in southern Israel on Oct. 7.

Good Housekeeping

By KAITLYN KEEGAN
Hartford Courant

MARTINMARK
Quartz has earned the top spot for its color selection, durability and scratch resistance.

What's hot and what's not in interior design for 2024

It's been quite a year for interior design. As houses are swept off the market in minutes after listing and new homeowners tackle what they want their home to be like, 2023 was marked with white, clean designs along with minimalism, shiplap and fast furniture.

The design world has shifted gears for 2024, ushering in an era of quartz, vintage furniture, wallpaper, cozy and divided interiors and bold colors and design. Sharon McCormick of Sharon McCormick Designs shared some tips on what's hot and what's not for the new year.

» It's all about the personality and character

What's hot for 2024

In the kitchen, it's all about the quartz. Quartz and quartzite countertops have become all the rage versus granite, marble or laminate. Quartz has earned the top spot for its color selection, durability and scratch resistance.

As far as design in kitchens, wood grain kitchen cabinets, particularly white oak, or cabinets in vibrant colors are taking over from the white kitchens that were in the last few years. Statement hoods also make a big difference. Beverage stations for coffee, smoothies or a wine bar are also becoming popular if you have the space.

Another big change is the flip from open space layouts to more traditionally divided rooms. The allure of smaller, more intimate spaces began with the pandemic and the trend has only become more popular. Cozy, more nurturing spaces are taking over from wide open layouts.

To furnish those rooms, think vintage. Upcycling and acquiring antiques has become very trendy. This keeps furniture out of landfills and also brings character to a home. For that vintage furniture, 2024 is bringing the curves. Curved designs in furniture and lighting are taking over this year. Consider wavy, wood furniture that adds a bit of pizzazz into a room.

When laying out your furniture in a room, maximalism without messiness is in. It plays into the want for cozy spaces. Accessorize as much as you want, but don't let things get too cluttered or overtaken especially in smaller rooms.

It's also time to play with colors, fabric and wallpaper. Bold patterns, especially striped and plaid fabrics, are very popular. This year, designers also like checkerboard patterns and tassels, fringe, braids and cords for window treatments and upholstery details.

On the color wheel, neutrals have taken over from gray. Think warm tones like beige, tan, cream, brown, caramel, amber, honey and butter. Beside neutrals, blue is the top color. Vibrant tones especially teal and aqua are hot along with purple, red and earthy greens.

As far as lighting spaces, layered lighting is popular. This can be done with bold, sculptural chandeliers, wall sconces, art lights, decorative ceiling lights and fixtures made of natural materials such as rattan, wicker and leather. If you have to do recessed lighting, canless LEDs are preferred.

MARGIE HURWICH
In the bedroom, layers are the key. Take multiple layers of bedding and use pillows, throws, upholstered furniture, wallpaper, art, lamps, moody colors and decorative lampshades.

Anything that adds character to a room is trending. This can be paneling or wall moldings, or customization and personalization. A big trend coming in for 2024 is decorated ceilings. You can achieve this look with paint, moldings, wallpaper or millwork. Wallpaper on the ceiling? It's in! Wallpaper can also be used to create murals to bring the outside in.

Did you go out and get a lot of mid century modern furniture while it was trending the last year or two? While mid century modern is falling out of style, you can mix in other styles with existing furniture to make a more eclectic look.

In the bedroom, layers are the key. Take multiple layers of bedding and use pillows, throws, upholstered furniture, wallpaper, art, lamps, moody colors and decorative lampshades. Have fun with it. Off of the bedroom, dressing rooms are becoming more popular, if you have the space. Large walk in closets you can get changed in, dressing rooms are a way to declutter your bedroom and move those things to their own separate space.

What's on its way out from 2023

Some of the things falling out of favor have been slowly dropping in popularity over the last few years. For example, gray has been consistently dropping in the trends. Also dropping as all-white interiors and mid-century modern.

Other trends that are not so popular anymore include granite countertops, open floor plans and minimalism.

One of the biggest changes in trends is fast furniture or furniture that is cheaply made, easily broken, and short term. These are the pieces most likely to end up in a landfill. The push to sustainability has driven this fast furniture industry out of favor.

Inside, there's a few design aspects you won't see as much of. These include boxy furniture, accent walls, matching furniture sets, can lighting and oversized bathtubs.

Also with the push to more individualism in design, sleek, generic, shiplap and impersonal hotel-style bedrooms have fallen from favor.

Overall, the trends are going toward having fun with your home design. Add more of your personality into your home. Don't be afraid of color or texture.

How to grow easy-care aloe vera, nature's burn ointment

By MELINDA MYERS
Star Tribune (Minneapolis)

Grow your own burn ointment by adding aloe vera to your indoor plant collection. This succulent has been used for centuries to treat superficial burns, cuts, sunburn and more.

The gel inside the leaves is the medicinal part of the plant. Just cut away the outer part of the leaf and use just the gel on the problem areas. Make sure to remove the latex plant sap located between the outer layer (skin) of the leaf and the gel that can cause skin irritation. It is always best to test a small area of your skin first.

You may have read about aloe vera being used in beverages and desserts. Properly prepare the aloe before consuming. Make sure to remove the latex and use only the gel to avoid cramps, diarrhea and stomach upset. Keep aloe vera plants out of the reach of children, cats and dogs.

Plant aloe vera in a container with drainage holes. Consider using a clay pot that allows the soil to thoroughly dry between watering and prevent larger often top-heavy plants from tipping over. Use a pot as wide as it is deep whenever possible to accommodate the spreading nature of this plant.

Cover the drainage hole with a coffee filter or piece of paper towel. This prevents the potting mix from leaking out the drainage holes after planting. Use a well-drained cacti and succulent potting mix.

DREAMSTIME
Aloe vera has been used for centuries to treat superficial burns, cuts, sunburn and more.

Grow this plant in a sunny window along with your other cacti and succulents. South and unobstructed east or west-facing windows are usually best. Set it under artificial lights if a brightly lit location is not available.

Water thoroughly whenever the top third of the soil is dry. Avoid applying water over the center of the plant where it can collect between the leaves and lead to rot. Pour off excess water that collects in the saucer.

Prevent early death of your plant by avoiding waterlogged soil. Watering too often or allowing the pot to sit in excess water can lead to root rot and the death of the plant. You will need to water less often in winter when days are shorter, light intensity is lower and plant growth is limited.

Keep plants away from cold drafts and temperatures below 50 degrees that can damage the plants. Northern gardeners may need to move the plants back a bit from the window in winter as outside temperatures drop.

Clean leaves occasionally with a damp rag. This removes any dust that may collect on the leaves and helps reduce the risk of insect pests such as mealy bugs and aphids. These plants are sensitive to many chemicals, so check the label and test a leaf before treating the whole plant if treatment is needed.

Watch for small plants to form at the base of the original plant. You can use these offsets, often called plantlets or pups, to start new plants to grow or share with others. Use a sharp knife to separate the small plants, roots and all, from the parent plant. Repot the offsets in small containers just an inch or two larger than the remaining root system.

Enjoy the beauty and medicinal benefits of this easy-care plant. Then consider gifting a few to your favorite gardeners and cooks.

Life & Style

Reformed mobster went after 'one last score' when he stole Judy Garland's ruby slippers

By JOSH FUNK
ASSOCIATED PRESS

AP
Ruby slippers once worn by Judy Garland in the "The Wizard of Oz" are displayed at a news conference on Sept. 4, 2018, at the FBI office in Brooklyn Center, Minn.

The aging reformed mobster who has admitted stealing a pair of ruby slippers that Judy Garland wore in "The Wizard of Oz" gave into the temptation of "one last score" after an old mob associate led him to believe the famous shoes must be adorned with real jewels to justify their $1 million insured value.

Terry Jon Martin's defense attorney finally revealed the 76-year-old's motive for the 2005 theft from the Judy Garland Museum in the late actor's hometown of Grand Rapids, Minnesota, in a new memo filed ahead of his Jan. 29 sentencing in Duluth, Minnesota.

The FBI recovered the shoes in 2018 when someone else tried to claim an insurance reward on them, but Martin wasn't charged with stealing them until last year.

Martin pleaded guilty in October to using a hammer to smash the glass of the museum door and display case to take the slippers. He had hoped to harvest real rubies from the shoes and sell them. But a fence, a person who deals in stolen goods, informed him the rubies were glass and Martin got rid of the slippers less than two days after he took them, he said.

Defense attorney Dane DeKrey said in his memo that an unidentified former mob associate tempted Martin to steal the shoes, even though he hadn't committed a crime in nearly 10 years after his last prison stint.

"At first, Terry declined the invitation to participate in the heist. But old habits die hard, and the thought of a 'final score' kept him up at night," DeKrey wrote. "After much contemplation, Terry had a criminal relapse and decided to participate in the theft."

DeKrey and prosecutors are recommending the judge sentence Martin to time served because he is physically incapable of presenting a threat to society. Martin is in hospice care with a life expectancy of less than six months. He needs oxygen at all times because of his chronic obstructive pulmonary disorder and was in a wheelchair at his most recent court appearance. Even if he were sentenced to prison, his poor health might be grounds for a compassionate release.

Martin had no idea about the cultural significance of the ruby slippers and had never seen the movie. Instead, DeKrey said he was just looking for one last big score, and the "old Terry" with a lifelong history of crimes like burglary and receiving stolen property beat out the "new Terry" who seemed to "finally put his demons to rest" after being released from prison in 1996 and became "a contributing member of society."

DeKrey urged the judge to consider the major events of Martin's life when deciding whether a lenient sentence is appropriate.

Martin suffered under a cruel stepmother who mistreated him and his three brothers so badly for several years that he left home at the age of 16 and began drinking and stealing.

While on parole from prison, Martin's girlfriend became pregnant with twins, but he missed their birth after his parole was revoked. Right after his girlfriend brought the 1-month-old twins to prison to meet him, they died after a train struck her vehicle.

Dave Eggers' children's book wins Newbery Medal

NEW YORK (AP)—Dave Eggers is now an award-winning children's author.

Eggers' "The Eyes & the Impossible," the great adventure of a very fast dog, has received the John Newbery Medal for the year's best children's book, an honor previously given to Beverly Cleary, Neil Gaiman and Lois Lowry among others. Eggers is otherwise known for such acclaimed adult books as "A Heartbreaking Work of Staggering Genius," "What Is the What" and "A Hologram for the King."

"I've read just about every Newbery winner from the last 50 years or so, and my kids grew up reading them, too," Eggers told The Associated Press in an email Monday. "Last night my kids were telling me how much that golden sticker meant to them as readers, and to have 'Eyes' among those books we love so much—it's just surreal."

Eggers has another book for young people, "Soren's Seventh Song," coming out next month.

The Randolph Caldecott Medal for outstanding illustration was given to Vashti Harrison's "Big," the first time the award was given to a Black woman since it was established in 1938. Last fall, "Big" was a National Book Award finalist.

The Newbery and Caldecott medals were among the awards announced by the American Library Association.

Pedro Martín's "Mexikid: A Graphic Memoir" won the Pura Belpré Award, given to Latinx writers, for best book and for illustration. Rebecca Yarros' "Fourth Wing" was among 10 winners of the Alex Award for adult book that appeal to teen readers. Other Alex recipients included Darrin Bell's "The Talk" and Nana Kwame Adjei-Brenyah's "Chain Gang All Stars."

Ibi Zoboi's "Nigeria Jones" won the Coretta Scott King Award for outstanding work by a Black author, and Dare Colter won the King illustration award for "An American Story," written by Kwame Alexander.

"The Collectors," a book of short stories featuring contributions from Jason Reynolds and David Levithan among others, received the Michael L. Printz Award for young adult literature. Neal Shusterman, author of "The Arc of the Scythe," "Bruiser" and Challenger Deep" among others, has received the Margaret Edwards Award for lifetime achievement.

Wife in unhappy marriage fantasizes about a friend

DEAR ABBY: I am an unhappily married woman with young children. I am attracted to a friend of mine and my husband's, but he is also married. He's a bit older, and I can't tell for sure if he has feelings for me, but sometimes I suspect it. He has made me jewelry and gifts, and I've caught him looking at me a few times.

We have exchanged messages on social media and he often asks me questions about myself -- what I like, etc. He's just so quiet that I can't tell if it all means anything. I could never leave my husband and break up my family, and I could never break up someone else's family. But I'm starting to wonder and sometimes think I really am falling in love with him. What should I do?

CRUSHING IN THE MIDWEST

DEAR CRUSHING: Face it: You're TAKEN. Because you could "never leave" your husband or break up someone else's marriage, figure out what's gone wrong in your relationship with your husband and resolve to fix it. Some sessions with a licensed marriage and family therapist would be the place to start. Do it NOW.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I am with someone who drinks and gambles and has made countless promises that have been broken. I recently checked his Facebook account, and he follows at least 12 women in their 20s, most of whom he barely knows or doesn't know at all. Most of them are almost naked in every picture.

I told him it bothers me, but he doesn't seem to care. I told him it is disrespectful to me as his significant other. I have also told him to think about the things he does that affect our relationship. To him, he's doing nothing wrong; to me, he's disrespecting me, and it's not the only time. He has written to a few of them telling them how beautiful they are. Am I wrong?

AT A LOSS IN FLORIDA

DEAR AT A LOSS: Your gentleman friend may be a voyeur drawn to photos of random "beautiful young ladies." It has nothing to do with respect (or the lack thereof) he has for you. He likes to LOOK! It is now time to ask yourself why you stay with someone who gambles, drinks and breaks his promises (which IS disrespectful). His voyeurism is the least of your worries.

■ ■ ■

DEAR ABBY: I went out to eat at a fancy Manhattan restaurant with some of my siblings. One of them over-ordered and ran up a huge bill. When it came time to pay, he said, "Let's charge it to Daddy's credit card." Our father is well-off and probably would have been OK with it, but I objected on principle.

We ended up splitting the bill, which irritated me since my wife and I ordered much less. I can't talk to them about it because they'll accuse me of being cheap. What should I have done and what should I do in the future when it crops up, because it will?

MONEY-CONSCIOUS IN NEW YORK

DEAR M-C: The next time you go to a fancy restaurant with your siblings, before the order is taken, tell the server you would like separate checks.

■ ■ ■

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for $8 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. (Shipping and handling are included in the price.)

DEAR ABBY

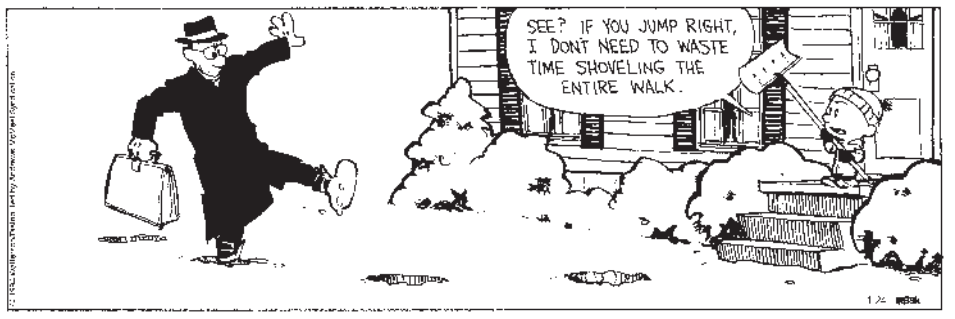
By Abigail Van Buren
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.

Pastimes

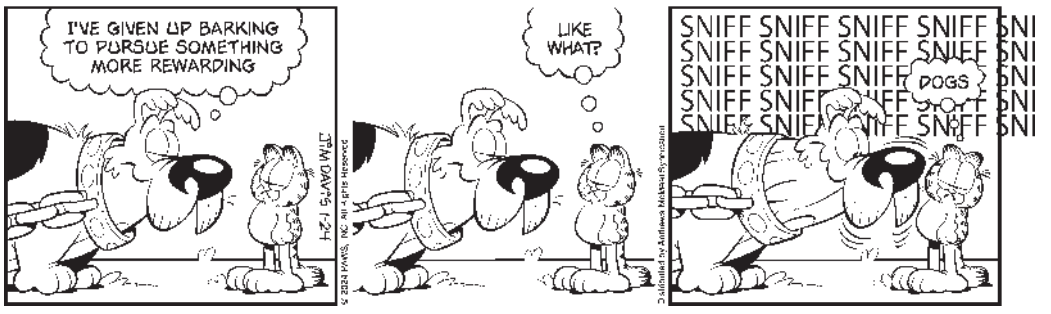
Calvin and Hobbes

By Bill Waterson



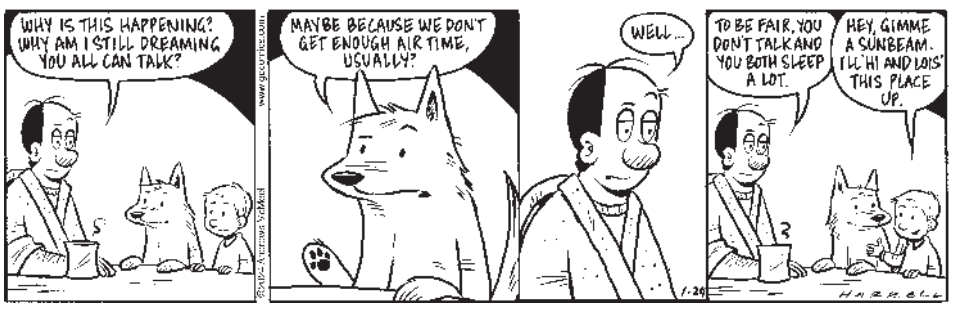
Garfield®

By Jim Davis


I'VE GIVEN UP BARKING TO PURSUE SOMETHING MORE REWARDING
LIKE WHAT?
SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNI
SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNI
SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF DOGS SNI
SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNI
SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNIFF SNI

Adam@home

By Bryan Basset


WHY IS THIS HAPPENING? WHY AM I STILL DREAMING YOU ALL CAN TALK?
MAYBE BECAUSE WE DON'T GET ENOUGH AIR TIME, USUALLY?
WELL...
TO BE FAIR, YOU DON'T TALK AND YOU BOTH SLEEP A LOT.
HEY, GIMME A SUNBEAM. I'LL 'HI AND LOIS' THIS PLACE UP.

The Duplex

By Glenn McCoy

SO, INSTEAD OF AN ACTUAL NEW CHARACTER IN THE STRIP, YOU'RE GOING TO ACT LIKE YOUR PHONY 'IDENTICAL TWIN,' BENO, THAT'S DUMB.
I BEG YOUR PARDON. I AM BENO, AND PLEASE DON'T CALL MY BROTHER'S IDEA DUMB.
I FEEL LIKE I'M IN A 'TWILIGHT ZONE' EPISODE.
NOW I CAN DRINK TWICE THE BEER.

CROSSWORD

By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS

1 Speck
4 Telly network
7 Dad
8 Tennis great Monica
10 Jeremy of "Entourage"
11 Lowbrow
13 "One last inquiry — this won't take long ..."
16 Blog feed
17 Mom's sisters
18 Secret-protecting doc.
19 Composer Satie
20 Fresh
21 Type of cake pan
23 Streep of "The Post"
25 Flex
26 — and call
27 Univ. dorm supervisors
28 "Swell!"
30 — Na Na
33 Terse response
36 "No Exit" writer
37 Chicago airport
38 Island near Java
39 Silent actor
40 Website contact no.
41 Chatter

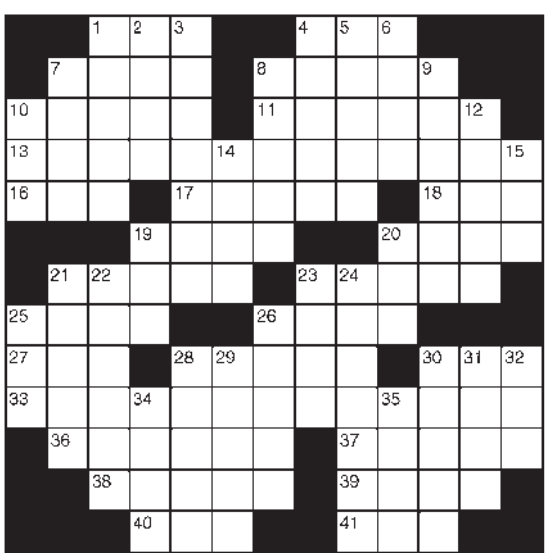
DOWN

1 Jazz legend Miles
2 Oil cartel
3 Alehouse vessel
4 Jaunty chapeau
5 Fashion designer Bill
6 "— la vie"
7 Name of 12 popes
8 Performed terribly
9 Climb a pole, say
10 "O" followers
12 Alpine air?
14 Resign
15 Slangy denial
19 Finale
20 Noah's boat
21 Pintos, e.g.
22 Oust from office
23 Self-referential
24 Market concern
25 Buddy
26 Justice Ruth — Ginsburg
28 Curt denial
29 Flynn of film
30 Bog
31 "Present!"
32 "All bets — off"
34 Legal document
35 Actor LaBeouf

Solution time: 23 mins.

B	O	N	N		S	P	A		S	C	A	R
E	D	I	E		N	I	T		T	A	R	E
L	O	N	F		A	C	A	D	F	M	I	C
T	R	A	D	E	R	S		U	P	P	E	D
			L	O	L		P	E	P			
B	I	D	E	N		P	O	L	E	M	I	C
E	A	U			D	E	W			A	B	E
E	N	D	E	M	I	C		P	H	I	M	O
			V	A	X		C	H	A			
A	T	I	I	C		C	A	D	D	I	L	D
R	H	Y	I	H	M	I	C		I	N	C	A
C	A	N	C		E	T	I		A	R	O	D
O	N	E	S		I	I	E		N	E	N	E

Yesterday's answer 1-24



STUMPED? For answers to today's crossword, call **1-900-226-5955!** 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY: Mischa Barton, 38; Tatyana Ali, 45; Ed Helms, 50; Neil Diamond, 83.

Happy Birthday: Pay attention, be direct and leave nothing to chance. It's up to you to adjust to suit your needs. Don't compromise regarding your passion, goals and health. Set high standards and expectations, and focus on reaching your goals with time to spare. Strive for perfection, and say no to anyone who tries to lead you astray. Take credit for your actions. Your numbers are 3, 12, 19, 21, 29, 35, 44.

ARIES *(March 21-April 19)*: Approach someone you trust to offer insight into a personal or professional situation. Join forces with someone who feels as driven as you to contribute to a cause that concerns you. Take better care of your health, and do your best to avoid injury. ✪✪

TAURUS *(April 20-May 20)*: You'll quickly pick up information and skills. Set out on a path of discovery, and you'll be surprised by what you learn and the changes you decide to implement. Say no to anyone trying to bully or control you. Take charge and follow your instincts. ✪✪✪✪

GEMINI *(May 21-June 20)*: Check facts before you make a move. Learn all you can about the people you'll be dealing with and the expectations others have of you. Don't trust someone's word; get what you want in writing. Promise only what you can deliver. Truth matters. ✪✪✪

CANCER *(June 21-July 22)*: Clear up any misunderstandings. Make sure everyone is on the same page before you start something new. Taking control will ensure you don't get sidetracked by trivial matters or interference. A partnership looks promising. ✪✪✪

LEO *(July 23-Aug. 22)*: Choose maintenance over replacement. Keep your costs down and your goal doable; you'll ease stress. If you do the work yourself, you'll pick up additional skills that will come in handy. Lower your overhead and put a financial plan in place. Excess is the enemy. ✪✪✪

VIRGO *(Aug. 23-Sept. 22)*: Live and learn. Use your knowledge and experience to outmaneuver anyone who wants to spar with you. A change of plans will work in your favor. Get involved in something that concerns you, and make a difference in the outcome. ✪✪✪✪

LIBRA *(Sept. 23-Oct. 22)*: Keep doing what you do best and ignore outside influences trying to ruin your plans. It's up to you to sidestep negativity and make your dream a reality. When in doubt, follow your heart and you'll have no regrets. Live within your means. ✪✪

SCORPIO *(Oct. 23-Nov. 21)*: Wake up and recognize what you have going for you. Refuse to let someone trying to manipulate you hinder your ability to get ahead. Trust in yourself, and you'll develop a unique platform to launch what you want to pursue. Positive action will pay off. ✪✪✪✪✪

SAGITTARIUS *(Nov. 22-Dec. 21)*: Don't trust someone else to do things for you. Take the initiative and do the best you can. Your enthusiasm and raw energy will help you reach the finish line. Avoid emotional spending, shared expenses and impulsive decisions. Plan your actions. ✪✪✪

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN *(Dec. 22-Jan. 19)*: Take what's yours and don't look back. Set your course and proceed with confidence. Keep everyone up to date to avoid interference. Dealing with matters as they arise will give you leverage when you need it the most. An opportunity is within reach. ✪✪✪

AQUARIUS *(Jan. 20-Feb. 18)*: Sit tight until things settle down. Learn from what's happening around you, and you'll avoid getting caught in a similar trap. Contact associates who can offer sound advice or a lead to help you establish yourself in other markets. The physical contributions you make will pay off. ✪✪✪

PISCES *(Feb. 19-March 20)*: Make changes that encourage you to pursue your goals. Let your imagination take over, and you'll figure out how to turn an idea into a prosperous venture. Call on experts and those you trust to contribute; something good will transpire. Romance is favored. ✪✪✪✪✪

Birthday Baby: You are persistent, insightful and friendly. You are organized and original.

✪: Avoid conflicts; work behind the scenes. ✪✪: You can accomplish, but don't rely on others. ✪✪✪: Focus and you'll reach your goals. ✪✪✪✪: Aim high; start new projects. ✪✪✪✪✪: Nothing can stop you; go for gold.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku *By Dave Green*

2		6	3					1
9	4			6				3
		7	4			6		5
		1	2		3			4
4				7	6	9		
6				1	4	5		
					2		5	
	2	9	7	3				
			5			2		

Difficulty: ★★★ 1/24

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer

1	7	5	6	8	3	4	9	2
6	9	3	7	4	2	5	8	1
8	4	2	9	1	5	6	7	3
7	2	4	5	3	1	9	6	8
5	8	1	4	6	9	3	2	7
3	6	9	8	2	7	1	4	5
9	5	6	3	7	8	2	1	4
4	1	7	2	5	6	8	3	9
2	3	8	1	9	4	7	5	6

Difficulty: ★★ 1/24

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WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the **WONDERWORD.**

OLED TELEVISIONS **Solution: 5 letters**

E	L	O	S	N	O	C	M	U	I	N	A	T	I	T
D	N	I	M	O	N	I	T	O	R	H	C	N	I	H
O	S	E	G	E	L	B	I	X	E	L	F	G	N	I
I	M	T	R	H	N	F	A	S	T	I	N	Y	T	N
D	A	T	R	G	T	U	C	N	L	I	E	T	E	R
I	R	H	A	E	Y	I	U	M	T	O	D	N	R	E
M	T	G	T	L	A	O	N	T	E	I	I	A	N	T
E	U	I	I	O	M	M	I	G	V	D	W	R	E	T
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Embiid sets franchise record with 70 points in 76ers' win over Spurs

PHILADELPHIA (AP)—Joel Embiid put on a performance for the ages—and thought it could've been even better.

Embiid scored a franchise-record 70 points, the most in the NBA this season, to lead the Philadelphia 76ers to a 133-123 victory over the San Antonio Spurs on Monday night.

He was 24 of 41 from the field, including 1 of 2 from 3-point range, and made 21 of 23 free throws. Embiid also set a career high with 18 rebounds. He broke Hall of Famer Wilt Chamberlain's 76ers record of 68 points, set on Dec. 16, 1967, with a layup with 1:41 to play.

"I was actually mad at myself because I missed a lot of easy shots that I've been making all season," he said.

Chamberlain was playing for the Philadelphia Warriors when he set the NBA record with 100 points.

"Obviously, Wilt accomplished a lot of things," Embiid said. "To be in the same conversation is pretty cool. It was just a great night. Had it going. They just kept giving me the ball and I just finished it."

A six-time All-Star and the league's reigning MVP, Embiid has scored at least 30 points in 21 consecutive games. The 76ers have won six in a row.

"The only thing I told my teammates was, 'Please don't force it,'" he said. "Let's just play basketball. We were just trying to play the right way."

Rookie Victor Wembanyama had 33 points and seven rebounds in 29 minutes in the first matchup between the 7-footers. The rebuilding Spurs fell to 5-19 on the road.

"It would have been more fun in a win, of course, but it's inspiring, especially offensively," Wembanyama said of playing against Embiid.

Embiid had tied his career high of 59 points through three quarters and re-entered the contest with 6:38 left and Philadelphia ahead 118-104. With the record in sight, the 76ers were feeding him the ball at every opportunity.

"The game was still pretty close," Embiid said. "Felt like I needed to go back in. Once I got back in, I was like, 'There's my chance. Might as well go and do it.'"

AP

San Antonio Spurs' Victor Wembanyama, left, and Philadelphia 76ers' Joel Embiid struggle for position during the first half of an NBA basketball game, Monday, Jan. 22, 2024, in Philadelphia.

Philadelphia first-year coach Nick Nurse marveled at Embiid's performance.

"Obviously he can score in so many ways, just his sheer size gets him a lot of stuff around the basket, gets him a lot of free throws," Nurse said. "The shooting touch is the skill part. The way he moves, the skill he has, the size he is, and he gets motivated like that, anything can happen I guess."

Giannis Antetokounmpo had the previous high game in the NBA this season with 64 points.

Embiid embraced former 76ers coach Brett Brown, now a Spurs assistant, after the game and later praised him.

"He's done a lot not just for me but for the whole city of Philadelphia," Embiid said. "I'm kind of glad I did it in front of him so he can kind of see the product of what he created."

All eyes were on Embiid and Wembanyama from even before the first tip when fans lined the court to watch the Spurs' French phenom in warmups. The home fans already know what Embiid can do, and Philadelphia's star might have wanted to make sure they didn't forget.

"It will be interesting for all of us to see for the first time," Nurse said before the game.

Electrifying might have been a better adjective.

Embiid hit a 13-footer over Wembanyama 1:11 into the contest. The Spurs rookie responded impressively, with a pair of 3-pointers within 27 seconds of each other, and then finished an alley-oop dunk before heading to the bench with 6:27 left in the first due to two fouls.

Spurs coach Gregg Popovich joked before the game that the Spurs' plan against Embiid was to "hammer his (butt). I told Wemby to back him down over the rim and just throw him through the rim."

But it was clear from the start that nothing was going to work. Embiid had 24 points on 8-for-12 shooting in the first quarter.

Embiid was impressed with Wembanyama.

"He's great, man," Embiid said. "He's got everything, size, skill, got everything. Bright future. He's already pretty good. Once he develops, he's going to be a lot of problems for a lot of guys in this league."

Embiid hopes it's after he retires.

"Hopefully when I don't have to guard him and I'm out of the league, hopefully he can break all these records," he said.

SUNS 116, BULLS 113

PHOENIX (AP)—Kevin Durant hit a contested 17-foot jumper with 1.6 seconds left to help Phoenix erase a 23-point deficit and stun Chicago.

The Suns have won six straight.

Durant finished with 43 points, eight assists and six rebounds, one night after scoring 40 in a win over the Indiana Pacers. Bradley Beal scored 18 and Devin Booker added 16.

Coby White led the Bulls with 26 points. DeMar DeRozan added 21 and Nikola Vucevic added 19 points and 17 rebounds.

BUCKS 122, PISTONS 113

DETROIT (AP)—Giannis Antetokounmpo had a triple-double and Khris Middleton added 26 points as Milwaukee pulled away late and beat Detroit.

Antetokounmpo finished with 31 points, 17 rebounds and 10 assists as the Bucks won for the fifth time in six games. Brook Lopez finished with 15 points and 11 rebounds.

Marcus Sasser led the Pistons with 23 points, and fellow reserve Isaiah Stewart had 19 points and eight rebounds. Jaden Ivey led the starters with 17 points as Detroit lost to Milwaukee for the second time in three nights.

HORNETS 128, TIMBERWOLVES 125

MINNEAPOLIS (AP)—Karl-Anthony Towns scored a franchise-record 62 points, including 44 in the first half, but Charlotte erased an 18-point deficit and stunned Minnesota.

Towns managed just four points on 2-for-10 shooting in the fourth quarter, when the Timberwolves were outscored 36-18. He thought he was fouled on a drive to the basket in the closing seconds and Minnesota trailing by one, then was short on a 3-point attempt on the final possession.

Miles Bridges scored 28 points and Brandon Miller had 27 for the Hornets. Leaky Black ripped the ball away from Towns on his way to the basket to preserve the Hornets' 10th victory of the season.

Charlotte went ahead for good at 122-121 on P.J. Washington's floater with 3:21 remaining. LaMelo Ball added 18 points for the Hornets, who had lost seven of their past eight games and had the Eastern Conference's third-worst mark entering Monday.

GRIZZLIES 108, RAPTORS 100

TORONTO (AP)—Jaren Jackson Jr. scored 16 of his 27 points in the first quarter, Luke Kennard added a season-high 19 points, and Memphis won its fourth straight north of the border, beating slumping Toronto.

Vince Williams Jr. had 18 points and 10 rebounds, and Santi Aldama scored 10 points before leaving because of a sore right knee as the short-handed Grizzlies won for the second time in their past six games.

Jackson finished with a career-high six steals, all in the first quarter, as the veteran big man wasted no time breaking his previous mark of five.

RJ Barrett scored 29 points for Toronto, and Scottie Barnes had 22 points and 12 rebounds. Immanuel Quickley had 10 assists but shot 3 for 13 and scored eight points as the Raptors lost for the eighth time in 10 games.

CAVALIERS 126, MAGIC 99

ORLANDO, Fla. (AP)—Sam Merrill scored 20 of his 26 points in the first half, and Cleveland beat Orlando for its eighth straight victory.

Donovan Mitchell added 25 points and 13 assists for the Cavaliers, who shot 20 for 38 (53%) from 3-point range. Cleveland never trailed and led by 36 points midway through the fourth quarter.

The Cavs' win streak is one short of the NBA's longest this season (set by the Magic and the Los Angeles Clippers), and all of it has been accomplished without Darius Garland and Evan Mobley, the team's second- and third-leading scorers.

Jarrett Allen, who didn't score until the Cavs had a 21-point lead, set a franchise record with his 12th straight double-double, finishing with 14 points and 11 rebounds.

CELTICS 119, MAVERICKS 110

DALLAS (AP)—Jayson Tatum had 38 points and 11 rebounds, Jaylen Brown scored 35 and Boston beat Dallas.

The NBA-leading Celtics were never in much trouble because their All-Star pair was more efficient on the second night of a back-to-back than the Dallas duo of Luka Doncic and Kyrie Irving after four days off.

Tatum and Brown combined to go 24 of 43 from the field while Doncic and Irving were 21 of 50, with Doncic not hitting his first 3-pointer until the fourth quarter and finishing 2 of 8 from beyond the arc.

Doncic had a triple-double with 33 points, 18 rebounds and 13 assists. Irving scored 23 coming off an unexpected break when a game at Golden State was postponed following the death of Warriors assistant Dejan Milojevic from a heart attack.

KINGS 122, HAWKS 107

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (AP)—Harrison Barnes scored 32 points and Sacramento beat short-handed Atlanta to snap a four-game losing streak.

The Hawks were without All-Star guard Trae Young, who suffered a concussion in Saturday's loss to the Cleveland Cavaliers.

Domantas Sabonis had 14 points and 21 rebounds for his 25th straight double-double, tying Oscar Robertson for the second-longest streak in franchise history. Robertson owns the record at 29 in a row.

Dejounte Murray had 35 points and 10 rebounds for Atlanta.

Cavs rookie Bates suspended 2 games in NBA G League for actions following weekend game

CLEVELAND (AP)—Cavaliers rookie forward Emoni Bates was suspended two games without pay by the NBA G League on Monday for going into the stands following his game with the Cleveland Charge over the weekend.

G League president Shareef Abdur-Rahim announced that Bates and Charge teammate Gabe Osabuohien were suspended for "entering the spectator stands" after the game Saturday in Alabama.

The league did not provide any other details about the incident, which happened after the Charge's 126-105 loss to the Birmingham Squadron.

Bates and Osabuohien will begin serving their suspensions Monday night when the Charge visit the Osceola Magic, league said.

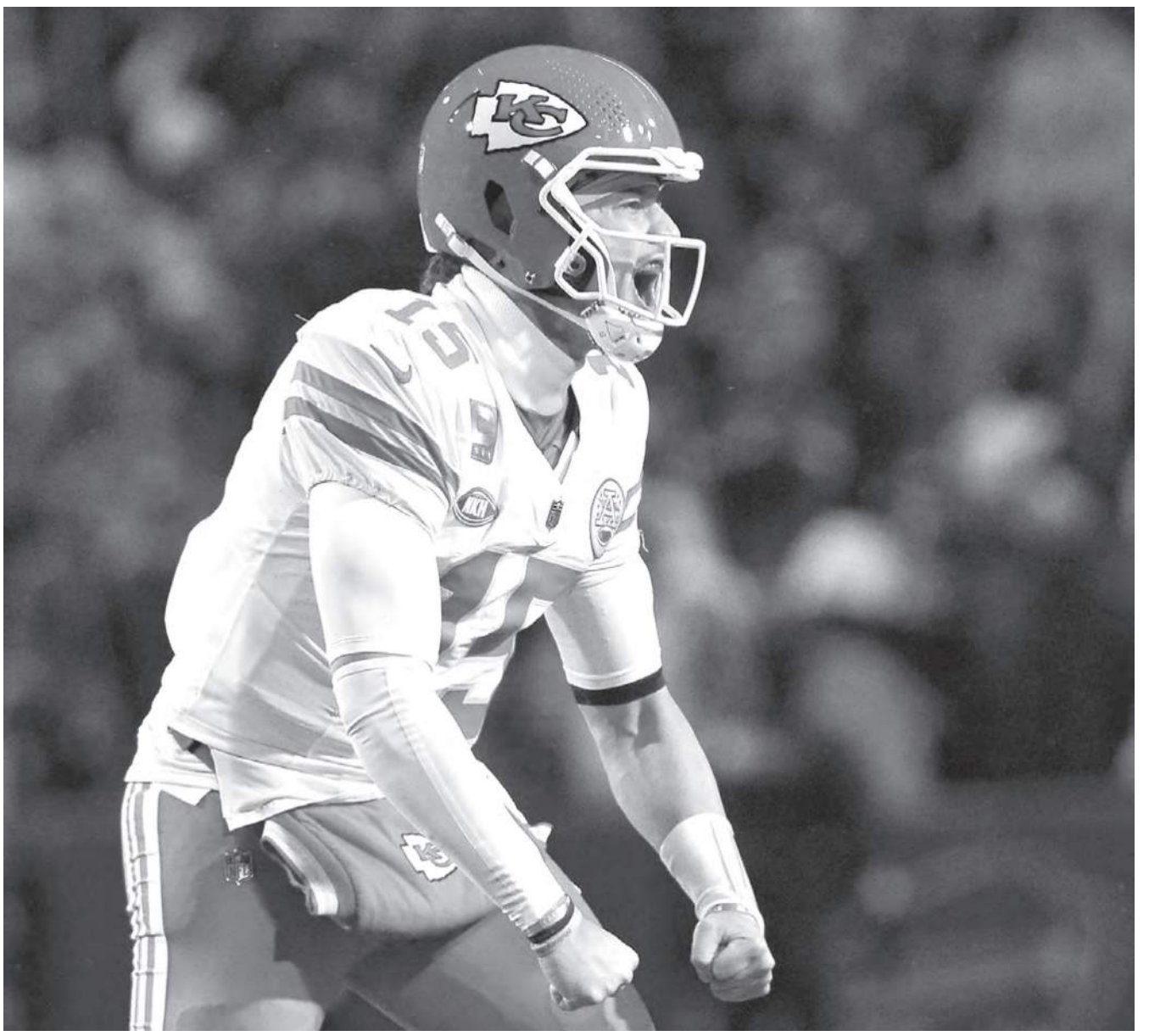
The Cavaliers selected Bates in the second round of last year's NBA draft. The 19-year-old, who has been touted as one of the nation's top prospects since his early teens, has appeared in 10 games for the Cavs and averaged 1.8 points in 7.6 minutes.

Bates spent one season at Memphis before transferring to Eastern Michigan in his hometown of Ypsilanti. He was suspended last season following an arrest on felony gun charges that were later dismissed.

Once he was reinstated, the 6-foot-9 Bates averaged 19.2 points and 5.8 rebounds for Eastern Michigan, and the Cavs were intrigued enough by his potential to select him with the No. 49 overall pick.

Analysis: Conference championships set with familiar faces and new arrivals

By ROB MAADDI
AP PRO FOOTBALL WRITER



AP
Kansas City Chiefs quarterback Patrick Mahomes (15) reacts after beating the Buffalo Bills in an NFL AFC division playoff football game, Sunday, Jan. 21, 2024, in Orchard Park, N.Y.

Patrick Mahomes and the Kansas City Chiefs are back in the AFC championship game for a sixth straight season and probably taking Taylor Swift with them along with Travis Kelce's older, shirtless brother.

Dan Campbell has the Detroit Lions one win away from the franchise's first Super Bowl appearance after securing a spot in the NFC title game on the three-year anniversary of his teeth-kicking, kneecap-biting introductory news conference.

The Chiefs and Lions advanced with tough, down-to-the-wire victories on Sunday. Both teams moved on to face the No. 1 seed in their conference: the AFC's Baltimore Ravens and the NFC's San Francisco 49ers.

The NFL's Final Four teams are set. It'll be Chiefs-Ravens and Lions-49ers battling for the right to play for the Vince Lombardi Trophy.

Mahomes made several brilliant plays in his first road playoff game—besides three Super Bowls—and outshined Josh Allen in a 27-24 victory at Buffalo that was secured when Bills kicker Tyler Bass missed a 44-yard field goal wide right with 1:43 left.

Mahomes, the two-time NFL and Super Bowl MVP, tossed two touchdown passes to Travis Kelce while Swift and Brittany Mahomes hugged in a suite and bare-chested Eagles All-Pro center Jason Kelce celebrated by chugging beers in the row behind them.

Lamar Jackson and the Ravens (14-4) are waiting on the Chiefs (13-6) after routing the Houston Texans 34-10 Saturday. It'll be the first AFC championship game played outside Kansas City since 2018.

Mahomes had a big smile on his face after the game as he ran off the field, dodging snowballs without a helmet protecting him.

"I love being in Arrowhead (Stadium) and playing in front of that crowd but when you're on the road, it's you vs. them," Mahomes said. "It's you vs. everybody in the stadium and you have to come together as a team and the guys do that."

Earlier Sunday, Campbell, Jared Goff and the feisty Lions beat the Tampa Bay Buccaneers 31-23 to earn their second playoff win in the same season for the first time since 1957, the last year Detroit won the NFL title.

The Lions (14-5) took advantage of costly mistakes, including drops, a missed field goal and Baker Mayfield's game-sealing interception to put away the Buccaneers.

Brock Purdy, Christian McCaffrey, George Kittle and a ferocious 49ers' defense led by Fred Warner stand in Detroit's way. The Lions have gone from 3-13-1 in Campbell's first season in 2021 to the brink of a trip to Las Vegas.

"Here, man, it's harsh winters, auto industry, blue collar, things aren't always easy," Campbell said about giving Detroit's long-suffering fans hope. "And I just think, that's what we're about. You want something the city can be proud of. You can look at those guys and say, 'Man, I can back that guy. I can back that team. I can resonate with those group of guys. They're kind of salty. They don't quit. They play hard.'

"And so, I feel like we've done that. And I think these guys, they have a kinship with this city and this area, and they love it, man, and ultimately, that's what you want. Now, a year from now, two years, we'll be getting booed, maybe; that's a whole other deal, though. But right now, life's good, and I'm glad we could deliver that."

As Campbell told his players during his postgame speech in the locker room, they have two more wins to go.

Getting the next one won't be easy against the 49ers. Purdy led San Francisco to a 24-21 comeback win over seventh-seeded Green Bay on Saturday night, sending the 49ers (13-5) to the NFC title game for the third consecutive season.

The Niners had no chance in hostile Philadelphia last year after Purdy suffered a significant elbow injury in the first quarter. They'll have a friendly atmosphere at home as coach Kyle Shanahan tries again to take the team back to the Super Bowl following a loss to Mahomes and the Chiefs four years ago.

San Francisco opened as 7-point favorites while Baltimore is a 3 1/2-point favorite, according to FanDuel Sportsbook.

Now one win from Super Bowl, Ravens face big hurdle in Mahomes and Chiefs

OWINGS MILLS, Md. (AP)—Yes, John Harbaugh will cop to having some Taylor Swift songs on his phone.

Aside from that, he wasn't playing along when asked about his next opponent's celebrity fan.

"I haven't been distracted by that at all," Harbaugh said. "It hasn't really crossed my mind at all."

Harbaugh has enough on his plate trying to coach the Baltimore Ravens to their first Super Bowl in 11 years. The last team standing in the way is the Kansas City Chiefs, who will be in town Sunday for the AFC championship game.

That means a showdown with Patrick Mahomes and a stout Kansas City defense.

"He buys time to run, sometimes. He buys time to throw. He's just a really elusive guy. You'll see him in space. Sometimes, he'll make guys miss," Harbaugh said. "It's just Patrick Mahomes. He's unique. Plays his own brand of football, been very successful. We'll just have to study him and do our best to try to keep him under wraps."

And yes, the Ravens will have to contend with Travis Kelce, the tight end whose romance with Swift has brought the pop superstar to NFL games around the country this season.

Kelce is coming off his first game all season with multiple touchdowns. He scored twice at Buffalo on Sunday night.

It's the fourth time the Ravens have reached the AFC championship game under Harbaugh—the coach is 1-2 in his previous appearances—but the first time with Lamar Jackson at quarterback.

"We're not in the dance yet, but I'm looking forward to next week, to be honest with you," Jackson said after Saturday's win over Houston. "I'm not even thinking about the Super Bowl until we handle business."

WHAT'S WORKING

Jackson set career highs in several passing categories for the Ravens this season. He also ran for 821 yards, an exceptional number for a quarterback but nearly 400 lower than his total from his MVP season in 2019.

At times, Jackson has seemed to pick his spots when running the ball, perhaps understanding the importance of staying healthy. But in Baltimore's 34-10 win over Houston, he looked ready to unleash his full repertoire during the postseason.

Jackson ran for 100 yards on 11 carries with two rushing scores to go along with his two passing TDs. He hadn't scored a rushing touchdown since October.

"You're going to see him there, then you're going to see him in the end zone. So, I'll call him a magician," receiver Zay Flowers said. "You never know where he (is) going to be."

WHAT NEEDS HELP

The Baltimore offense sputtered in the second quarter before the Ravens adjusted to the blitzing Houston defense with short passes. Jackson ended up throwing for 152 yards, his lowest total of the season, and if Baltimore wants to take deeper shots against the Chiefs, the star quarterback will need time.

STOCK UP

Ronald Darby was solid for a defense that overcame the absence of cornerback Marlon Humphrey, who missed the game with a calf injury. Darby started eight games in the regular season.

"Ronald Darby has played outstanding. Brandon Stephens has been outstanding. Arthur Maulet has played outstanding. Rock (Ya-Sin) has played outstanding," Harbaugh said. "All of those guys have stepped up and played very good. The coverage has just been great, and with Marlon, I promise you—if Marlon can go, he will."

STOCK DOWN

The punt team had a rough day, allowing a 67-yard return for Houston's only touchdown. Jordan Stout also had a 24-yard punt in the first half that led to a field goal by the Texans.

INJURIES

Mark Andrews (ankle) did not play against the Texans, but he has been practicing, which suggests he could be on the field this weekend for the first time since November.

"We'll just see how he goes. We're looking forward to it," Harbaugh said. "He practiced last week, and I'm sure he'll practice again this week. If he's ready to play, he'll play."

KEY NUMBER

5 – The number of false starts committed by Houston in the game, a sign that the Baltimore crowd was having an effect.

NEXT STEPS

This is the first time Baltimore will host an AFC championship game since the Colts beat the Oakland Raiders in January 1971. The duel between Mahomes and Jackson is the first playoff matchup between former MVP quarterbacks who are both under 30, according to the NFL.

Wimbledon champ Alcaraz sets up quarterfinal against Zverev

» Four first-timers into women's last 8

MELBOURNE, Australia (AP) — Wimbledon champion Carlos Alcaraz will meet Olympic gold medalist Alexander Zverev in the Australian Open quarterfinals and Daniil Medvedev is also back in a last eight that is stacked with the top six seeds.

While the men's competition is playing fairly true to the rankings, the women's really is a tale of two halves.

No. 12-seeded Zheng Qinwen, a quarterfinalist at last year's U.S. Open, is the highest-ranked player left in the top half of the bracket, where all four women who won Monday reached the last eight at Melbourne Park for the first time.

AP

Carlos Alcaraz of Spain celebrates after defeating Miomir Kecmanovic of Serbia during their fourth round match at the Australian Open tennis championships at Melbourne Park, Melbourne, Australia, Monday, Jan. 22, 2024.

"The people who arrive to quarterfinals, for sure they're all feeling really well in this tournament," Zheng said after her 6-0, 6-3 win over No. 95 Oceane Dodin. "It's one player against another player, and we will compete."

She'll next play No. 75-ranked Anna Kalinskaya. No. 50 Linda Noskova, who beat top-ranked Iga Swiatek in the third round, will meet No. 93 Dayana Yastremska.

There's still three Grand Slam winners in the other half of the bracket. No. 2 Aryna Sabalenka, the defending champion, will take on 2021 French Open champion Barbora Krejcikova and U.S. Open winner Coco Gauff will play Marta Kostyuk in quarterfinals on Tuesday.

The first of the men's quarterfinals—10-time Australian Open champion Novak Djokovic vs. No. 12 Taylor Fritz and No. 4 Jannik Sinner vs. No. 5 Andrey Rublev—were set on Sunday, well before Alcaraz completed a Grand Slam set by reaching the last eight in Australia for the first time.

The 20-year-old Alcaraz missed the 2023 Australian Open because of injury, but is making up for lost time.

He beat Miomir Kecmanovic 6-4, 6-4, 6-0 in less than two hours to open Monday's night session on Rod Laver Arena.

"Every match I'm playing, I'm feeling better and better on a court I didn't play so much," Alcaraz, the only man to beat Djokovic in a major last year, said of his buildup here. "Hopefully the same as Wimbledon. Yeah, could be the same."

He has dropped just one set. Zverev is into the quarterfinals here for the third time but is coming off some long five-set wins, including a four-hour, 7-5, 3-6, 6-3, 4-6, 7-6 (3) fourth-round victory over No. 19 Cameron Norrie.

It was the 32nd five-set match so far at the tournament, an Open era record in Australia.

Their match on Margaret Court Arena was prolonged after being delayed briefly when a protester threw anti-war pamphlets onto the back of the court in the third set. The protester was escorted out by security.

No. 3 Medvedev, a two-time Australian Open runner-up, beat No. 69-ranked Nuno Borges 6-3, 7-6 (4), 5-7, 6-1 and will next face No. 9 Hubert Hurkacz, who ended the run of French wild-card entry Arthur Cazaux 7-6 (6), 7-6 (3), 6-4.

RAMSEY

From page 20

undefeated in the round-robin format against three other doubles partners.

In the mixed doubles 4.0 division, Andrew Chung and Claire Park won all their matches in the round-robin format, while Edwin Simbulan and Min Han claimed the mixed doubles 3.0 championship. Simbulan and Han defeated John Bradley and Mingyue Pascual, 6-2, 6-2, in the finals.

Fourteen-year-old Wessel, on winning his U16 competition against Simon Tang last week said, "I feel good on winning my U16 match because I showed that I can actually win if I tried to. The competition was hard but I just played calm and it turned out well for me in the end. Simon is my hardest competition because he really knows how to play with my mind a lot, and he's very fast as well."

As for his level of play after the Pacific Games, he said, "My tennis skills after the Pacific Games didn't improve much but the one thing that did improve was my perspective in the game." He added, "I'm looking at competing in the Micro Games this year because that's something my family has done when we lived in the [Federated States of Micronesia] and I want to carry on the tradition."

As for the tourney for organizer Serin Chung, a senior at Saipan International School, said there were a total of 70 participants. "The turnout was great, especially with people coming to watch the matches even if they weren't playing. This tournament has lots of levels of competition. Especially since we try to get everyone involved. Some divisions are very competitive, with many matches going to super tie."

She then said, "Thank you to everyone who joined, and thank you to Crowne Plaza, American Memorial Park, Tan Holdings, Northern Marianas Tennis Association, Himawari, Java Joe's, and MangoSix."

TOP-TIER

From page 20

(Grade 3 level)—that also doubled as qualifiers for the 2024 Paris Olympic Games. With that, according to NMBA, NMI is the first nation to host back-to-back International Challenges.

Each tournament—the TakeCare Saipan International 2023 and the Crowne Plaza Resort Saipan Northern Marianas Open 2023 that was held last June—welcomed 170 players from 29 countries, and about 30 officials.

"Players and officials stayed on Saipan for nearly two weeks—a great support to our sports tourism campaign. Our local crowd witnessed world-class games, featuring former and current Olympians, plus promising junior players. Our local players got to experience how it felt like to play in a world-ranking tournament. To top it all, we have lots of positive feedback from our visiting players and teams and that, plus our ability to host international events made Badminton World Federation award us hosting rights for another pair of International Challenge tournaments in July 2024," said Tolentino.

Other milestones NMBA accomplished in 2023 was sending the first NM junior team to Pacific U15 Junior Team Challenge held in New Zealand last February; NMI senior players competed for the first time in the VICTOR Oceania Championships 2023 in New Zealand also last February; saw an 81 % growth in student participation to the interscholastic badminton league (high school and middle school division combined). According to NMBA, it has the highest percentage among the seven programs offered under the CNMI Public School System Athletic Department (covering both public and private schools).

Furthermore, it sent its first coach, Janelle Pangilinan, to the Badminton World Federation Female Coach Mentoring Program in Denmark last August; and saw the appointment of NMBA general secretary Christy Villaflor as line judge in the TotalEnergies BWF Thomas & Uber Cup Finals 2024. Those two are major tournaments and the most prestigious tournament in the world, according to NMBA. The Thomas and Uber Cup Finals 2024 will be held in Chengdu, China from April 28 to May 5.

As for their 2024 sports calendar, they will start the year off with the TakeCare Interscholastic Badminton League (high school division) in February. Also in February, they will send a team down to Australia for the Pacific U15 Junior Team Challenge; from July 1-7 is week one International Challenge (BWF Grade 3 Tournament), and from July 8 to 14 is week two of the International Challenge.

NMBA is working on having local tournaments before the BWF events to prepare local players for the International Challenge. They will also host "Shuttle Time," which is a series of outreach programs for schools; and will also continue to hold tutor courses for individuals interested in becoming coaches which is in partnership with Badminton Oceania and Badminton World Federation.

NMBA thanks all their valued sponsors/partners "for providing us the support that we need to continue our various programs and to host two international events."

"Thank you to the CNMI Public School System leadership and all the schools that participated in our programs. Thank you to the PSS Athletic Department, Northern Marianas Sports Association, Badminton Oceania, Badminton World Federation, and all the sponsors of the Crowne Plaza Northern Marianas Open and TakeCare Saipan International."

They also thanked NMI middle school and high school players for taking an interest in badminton. "We have high hopes for them, as we are looking at our future national players and coaches. The best way to grow our program is to strengthen our grassroots and the schools and their students are the best foundation for the grassroots program," said Tolentino. "Thank you to the parents, principals, and teachers for supporting your children/students and allowing them to play badminton," she added.

Tolentino then said, NMBA, with support from Badminton Oceania, Badminton World Federation, and NMSA, "will continue to work on gaining access to resources that will help our players and coaches get better and improve their skills. We hope to provide them with more opportunities to experience high-level competitions and training."

She said they are also seeking support from the community for the back-to-back international tournaments that NMI will be hosting this July.

TOLENTINO

From page 20

second went to Chris Lucas Esdrelon at 1:30:22.

The 40-49 age category Top 3 was Rosalio Quintos with a time of 1:05:50; just seven seconds off was Hernan Cristobal at 1:50:57; and third was Matthew Fehrenbacker at 1:06:47.

Manny Basa was the lone racer in the 50-59 category and came in at 1:16:50. Pax Guevarra was first in the 60-and-above age category, followed by Danny Banez at 1:18:56.

In the MTB long course women's division, Beth Kohnen came in at 1:16:50.

Top 3 in the MTB men's 20km short course was Fradel Sedillo at 47:25; Rico Manungay with 51:00; and third was John Jimeno 51:04.

Juanita Fajardo was the lone biker in the MTB women's 20-km short course and came in at 1:05:46.

In the E-Bike men's division, Jerry Tan came in first at 54:48; second was Hojin Woo with a time of 54:55; and third was Dindo Pablo at 54:56. In the women's division, Elna Curate was first in the 50-59 age group at 54:19; second was Christy Villaflor who clocked in at 54:53; and Merlie Tolentino was third at 54:54.

Irish Pagarao was the lone racer in the U40 age group at 54:52; and Melanie Santos was the only biker in the 40-49 with a time of 54:40.

Raymund Tolentino, in a Facebook post after the race, shared that it was his first bike race of the year and said it was a good one. He said he was so happy and had his best ride in the race as he won first place overall in the MTB division.

"I never imagined that this first month of this year, my first bike race, my first ride, my first medal is going to be my very first MTB overall champion[ship]. I'm glad I raced today after the Trinity Run last week. My legs are sore from running three consecutive days and I feel very tired and drained," said Tolentino.

He gave a shout out to Nap Dizon for guiding and helping him with the race. He said he biked behind Dizon and it helped him "ride smoothly because he was blocking the strong winds. We were able to get to Bird Island and manage to get [past] the uphill elbow going back to Banzai cliff. Surprisingly, I finished it in only one hour."

He thanked the Rotary Club of Saipan, the participants, the volunteers, and the Department of Public Safety. He also dedicated his win to his family and his coworker, Joey Ramirez Ejercito, who was supposed to join the race as well but was injured recently.

For Spaeth, she said it was a "wonderful" race for a "great cause." A biker of 10 years now, the lead was a close one against McKagan, and Spaeth said throughout the race, she was just trying not to fall.

Spaeth, who is 40 years old, said, "to be at this age and still race—I'm able to show my kids to live an active and healthy lifestyle."

Results of the kids course will be posted in the next issues of *Saipan Tribune.*

Embiid sets franchise record with 70 points in 76ers' win over Spurs.

PAGE 17

Saipan Tribune
Sports

Wimbledon champ Alcaraz sets up quarterfinal against Zverev.

PAGE 19

Ramsey tops men's open 5.0

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

Former teammates at the 2023 Pacific Games Colin Ramsey and Nason Wessel faced off against each other in the men's open 5.0 finals of the 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament that was held from last Friday to Sunday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts.

The windy Sunday afternoon held no bearing over Ramsey as he mowed down Wessel, 6-3, 6-2, who is 10 years his junior.

No. 1 seed Ramsey first defeated another former teammate, June Yu, in the semis, 6-3, 6-1, and prior to that, beat Simon Tang, 6-2, 6-1.

The 24-year-old Ramsey showed he was comfortable on the court and throughout the tournament by plowing the high school netters with ease. He didn't have much older competition as Ramsey shared that No. 2 seed Tomas Abel had to drop out in the middle of the tourney, while Bobby Cruz was in Australia, and Pacific Games teammate Moris Villanueva did not compete.

Ramsey said of Wessel, who won the U16 championships in the tourney a week prior, that "he's getting better everyday. I think there will be more finals contentions for him."

In other results in the men's 3.0 division, John Bradley overpowered Jack Linden, 6-0, 6-2. Bradley went through Andrew Chung in a tough semis matchup, 4-6, 6-2, 14-12, and first breezed past June Kim, 6-0, 6-1.

The mixed doubles 5.0 division was won by David Kwon and Ann Kwon, after they went

See RAMSEY on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

Colin Ramsey draws up a serve during his finals match in the men's open 5.0 division against Nason Wessel in the 2024 SIS Student Council Tennis Tournament last Sunday at the American Memorial Park tennis courts.

Top-tier 2023 for NMBA

By LEIGH GASES
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REPORTER

The Northern Marianas Badminton Association had a top-tier 2023 as they rated their year high with a nine on a scale of 1-10.

"We made many accomplishments in 2023 and still have room for improvement and strive for more goals for 2024 and beyond," said NMBA president Merlie Tolentino.

The highlight of their year was hosting a Badminton World Federation-ranking tournament—not just one, but two International Challenge tournaments

See TOP-TIER on Page 19

LEIGH GASES

From left, NMI national badminton player and Northern Marianas Badminton Association vice president Nathan Guerrero and NMBA treasurer Shirley Kim pose with NMBA president Merlie Tolentino, who is holding the certificate of appreciation from Badminton Oceania Loke Poh Wang, right, during the awards ceremony of the TakeCare Saipan International 2023 last June at the Gilbert C. Ada Gymnasium.

Tolentino, Spaeth top MTB, Road Bike long course

By LEIGH GASES
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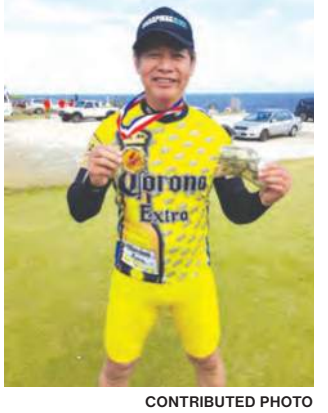
REPORTER

Raymund Tolentino and Robyn Spaeth hung up their running shoes for biking shoes and helmets and took charge in their respective divisions in the long course of the Inaugural Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Cycling Challenge last Saturday morning.

Tolentino sped into the finish line first in the 30-kilometer course in the MTB category with a time of 1:02:06. Second went to Bryan Ytac at 1:02:49, and third place was Butch Sublemente at 1:04:17.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MTB long course overall winner Raymund Tolentino poses with his medal and cash prize during the awarding of the Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Cycling Challenge last Saturday morning at the Banzai Cliff.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

MTB long course overall winner in the women's division, Robyn Spaeth is all smiles as she heads to the finish line at Banzai Cliff of the Rotary Club of Saipan's End Polio Cycling Challenge last Saturday morning.

In the women's division of the Road Bike 30-km course, Spaeth was blown by the strong early morning wind into first place at 58:17. Kimiko McKagan came in a close second with a time of 58:44, and third place was Jay Anne Felipe with 59:26.

In the same division but in the U40 age group, J.C. Ferrer came in at 1:05:52; and in the 40-49 age group, Marjorie Ganacias clocked in at 1:14:07.

In other age categories of the MTB long course of the men's division, Roy Hernandez was first in the U40 at 1:21:51, and

See TOLENTINO on Page 19